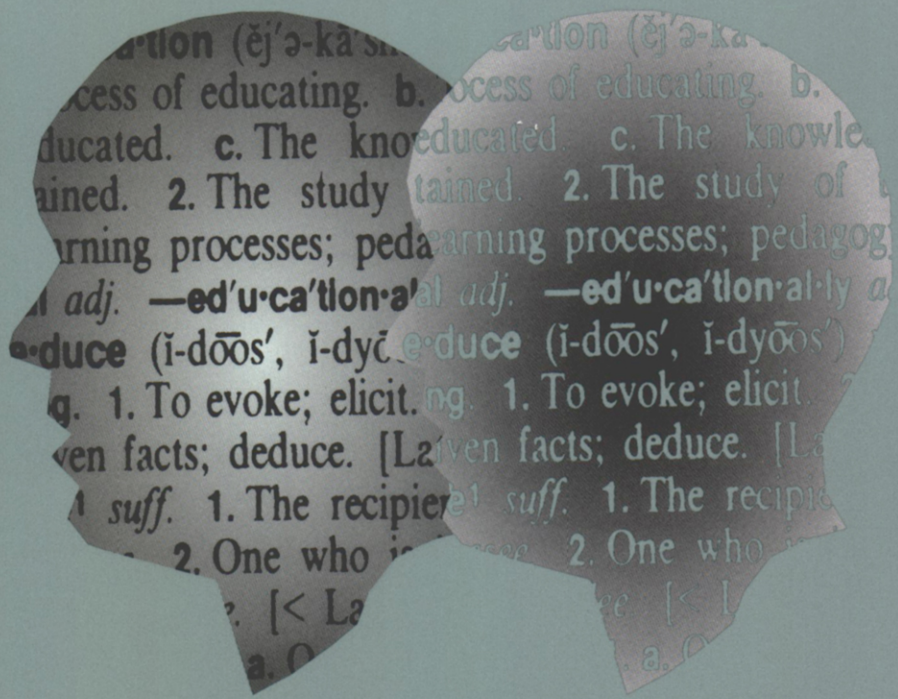

HIGHER EDUCATION EXCHANGE

2002

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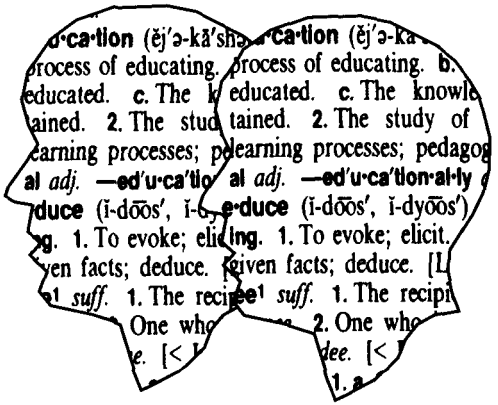

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FOREWORD

By Deborah Witte

Last fall, after almost ten years of publication, the editors of this journal sent out a readers' survey. We wanted to know something about you, our readers — the types of institutions you're affiliated with, your disciplines and interests — as well as how you are using the journal and, in general, what you think about it.

Thanks for responding. Some of the data we collected is strictly quantitative, most of it qualitative. Together, I think, the data provides a full and rich picture of our readers. Here's what you told us.

Seventy percent of you are employed by a college or university — two-thirds of that number as faculty, one-third as administrators. No surprise there. Another 15 percent of you are affiliated with nonprofits and community-based organizations. The rest of you occupy that no-man's land of "other." More than half of you have read some, if not all, of the last issue of the *Higher Education Exchange (HEE)*. Mostly, you browse the table of contents, picking and choosing from the selections. Sometimes you find lots to your liking, sometimes not. One reader told us, "I found the *whole* issue interesting." Bless you.

From the 2001 issue, you especially appreciated the interviews coeditor David Brown did with John Wheat and William Hubbard. Bill Lacy's article on democratizing science garnered a lot of attention, as did the Peter Levine piece on public intellectuals and their influence on economics. Many of you let us know that you read a few pieces before passing the journal on to colleagues, students, journalists, officeholders, even fellow Rotary Club members. That is gratifying to know. Lots of you provided the names of colleagues that you would like to receive the journal. We've added them to our mailing list and they have received a copy of this 2002 issue.

You found the articles that required reflection to be the most useful and thought-provoking. Those that provided another perspective to problems you might be struggling with were sought out. As readers, you are also looking for articles that "clearly con-

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nect academics with work in communities," as one reader wrote. You are buoyed by articles that make the observation that "we aspire to be citizens in a democracy and not merely consumers of commodities and goods."

As readers of the *Higher Education Exchange*, you are interested in the changing mission of higher education and the role faculty might play in this change. You're seeking information and stories of firsthand experience with collaborative university-community projects. You're interested in curriculum restructuring that fosters civic engagement. You're "interested in all aspects of public scholarship — how to define it and also apply it."

You're concerned about the state of civic education and civic competencies. You told us you "understand the dynamics between an authentic community-based approach and the 'expert model' that typically dominates higher education" and you want to do something about it. You're interested in "how individual citizens come to acquire the necessary civic capacities and how thorny questions of democratic exchange are revealed in policy-making and implementation processes." You're interested in "strategies for enhancing civic literacy" and in sharing your scholarship with the public.

You told us the level of discourse in the *Higher Education Exchange* is encouraging, even inspiring, and as such you use the journal in your graduate classes. In your comments, you shared citations for the work of other scholars in the field whose work we should be aware of. You shared Web sites we might visit and on-line articles we should read. You are also interested in "higher education's articulation of its historic public purpose." In this age of information overload, you appreciate the diversity of topics in the *Higher Education Exchange* and, as one reader put it, "that it only has 6-8 articles in it."

You counseled us that "the Web is the way to go. Electronic access may make it possible to reach a larger audience." You suggested, "at some time I hope you will consider on-line discussions among professionals on the issues you raise. Our department has few faculty and it would be good to engage in discussion of issues with others."

In reading over the comments, there were moments of levity, too. A few of you were confused about which Kettering Foundation publication you were being asked about. That's understandable — we have an ambitious publication schedule.

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You mentioned enjoying articles by authors whom we've never published in the *Exchange.* One of you wants a scholarship to study English in the U.S. Sorry, we're a foundation, but we don't give grants.

And you were honest, too, about what is missing or what could be improved in the *Higher Education Exchange*. One reader shared this: "Sometimes the essays are bland — they are 'politically correct,' and as a result, they sometimes seem naïve." Another reader said, "Sometimes the level of writing is pedestrian, even when the quality of thought is high." Yet another reader suggested, "It would be good to see the occasional skeptical article." But the old adage about pleasing all the people all the time was in evidence. Witness this comment. "It is sometimes *too* intellectual — albeit well-written."

On the whole, you see the *Higher Education Exchange* as a place where you can find thoughtful and useful articles written by colleagues and fellow thinkers. It is, in the words of one reader, "a discourse that provides me with a sensible, clear civic vocabulary."

We are honored to have had this opportunity to be an avenue through which this conversation about public scholarship can continue, in all its complexities. Some of the topics that we encountered again and again in your responses to the survey include leadership, deliberation, ethics, civic responsibility, and university-community collaboration. You mentioned other topics that also intrigued us, such as the relationship between religion and democracy. Thank you again for responding to the *HEE* survey. I appreciate your sharing the interests, ideas, and critiques. It's been illuminating getting to know you.

Now, here's what's in this issue.

While public scholarship, and issues of definition and implementation, are understood by our readers as the focus of this journal, there are additional themes that help to make the conversation richer and more varied. Ways of connecting, ways of knowing, and ways of imagining are also part of the conversation about public scholarship.

We begin with David W. Brown, coeditor of the *Higher Education Exchange,* and his story of a university's response to the terrorist attacks of September 11. While at first glance it would seem the university's response was appropriate, as well as generous, Brown points out a lack of engagement or connection by the university with those most affected by the catastrophe. The university,

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unfortunately, sees itself as rescuer, the community as victim. He suggests that public thinking, like the public grieving evident in the weeks and months following the attack, is not something that anyone can do alone. Public thinking about what should be done — in this case how, or if, lower Manhattan should be rebuilt — can only be done with others. He leaves us with a promise to revisit this story in another issue of the *Exchange*.

David Brown then introduces us to Julie Ellison and her work with Imagining America (IA). The purpose of IA, in Ellison's words, is to "connect whole sectors within individual states — higher education, the public, and nonprofit arts and humanities," within a simply organized structure. "Excellent, honest partnerships," she tells David, "grapple with finding the right balance of critique and celebration from a particular project. There's no formula. That's part of the work of making a common language and a common culture."

David Cooper tells a highly personal story of his own journey to public scholarship. "Could I," he asks himself, "bring my 'whole self' to a vocation in higher education? Could I practice a scholarship that nourished an active inner life, while forging strong and meaningful links to the public sphere?" More than 30 years as an academic, through a string of adjunct appointments and finally a tenure track position, he struggled "to chart a course through academe," and found a way to enter "as fully as I could into the public dimensions of the humanities."

Phillip Sandro, in a most provocative article, outlines a mode of research and teaching that he calls "an organizing approach to teaching." His research and reflection — grounded in his work as an organizer — reveals the confluence of education and organization that provides the structure for Sandro's Metro Urban Studies Term (MUST). This highly integrated combination of theoretical work, field work, and social change internships provides an alternative to the highly contested terrain of current civic education. Sandro argues for a move from a detached mode of scholarship to a "problem-posing, relational, publicly engaged critical pedagogy that connects students to public work."

Laura Grattan writes a review of *Making Social Science Matter* by Bent Flyvbjerg. Flyvbjerg's most useful contribution to an understanding of public scholarship, according to Grattan, "is his rich discussion of what that scholarship might look like in practice. Like many who have described public scholarship,

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Flyvbjerg prefers loose guidelines to exact methods. . . . The analysis of actual daily practices rather than of discourse theory should provide the basis for knowledge about a particular situation." It is this *phronetic* approach — balancing instrumental rationality with value rationality — that contributes to a public's capacity to deliberate and act.

Douglas Challenger and Joni Doherty, professors at Franklin Pierce College in New Hampshire, share a story of academy-community collaboration. The Rindge 2002 project provides the backdrop for a look at the way a college engages its faculty, its students, and the community to answer questions of what should be done, in this case a development plan for the community. The authentic voices of the public are heard in their story of community-building.

In a now traditional article on a National Issues Forums Public Policy Institute (PPI), Anne Wolford, Larkin Dudley, and Diane Zahm write of the success stories of the Virginia Tech PPI. In less than ten years, the faculty of Virginia Tech, through their PPI, have reached well beyond their own institution. Government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, other universities, and surrounding communities have all benefited from the work of Virginia Tech and the Virginia Cooperative Extension.

Finally, David Mathews, in his "Afterword," provides his own take on this collection of articles. He concentrates on the idea of *phronesis* and asks pointed questions for future issues of the *Higher Education Exchange*.

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PUBLIC GRIEVING AND PUBLIC THINKING

By David W. Brown

Across the country, the unprecedented events of September 11 prompted what I would call public grieving. In New York City in particular, public places were crowded with strangers looking for each other, looking out for each other, sharing their shock, their grief, and their mutual vulnerability. There were spontaneous gatherings on street corners and in parks, in front of fire stations and hospitals, wherever New Yorkers were drawn in the wake of such horror. It was an extraordinary time in which the anonymity so prized in big city life became a difficult burden for many people. In familiar places, unfamiliar faces gave and received comfort. Public grieving was palpable everywhere.

I was drawn to the park in Union Square, not far from where I work and teach, and two miles from ground zero in lower Manhattan. Union Square is a place with a colorful history, once a site for mansions and artists, theatre and nightlife, labor protests and derelicts, and for a time even Tammany Hall held sway there. More recently, the square hosts a prominent greenmarket where farmers and artisans sell their produce and wares from the back of pickup trucks and vans. The park in the center of the square is a familiar place where rollerbladers meet up, street entertainers and religious zealots vie for attention, and dog owners, teeny boppers and the curious congregate.

What I saw both day and night last September in the square and its park were strangers expressing an urgent need to communicate their feelings and thoughts in a public space with public witnesses. It was apparent and understood among those who sat cross-legged in small groups or stood in circles that it was not enough, or even bearable, to grieve alone. Men and women of all ages had come to Union Square to share their fear as well as their sorrow — lighting candles, holding hands, and writing messages of hope, despair, anger on makeshift canvas and posterboard. They read each other's posted messages, sang, prayed and, in unaffected communion, tried to make sense of what had happened and what should be done.

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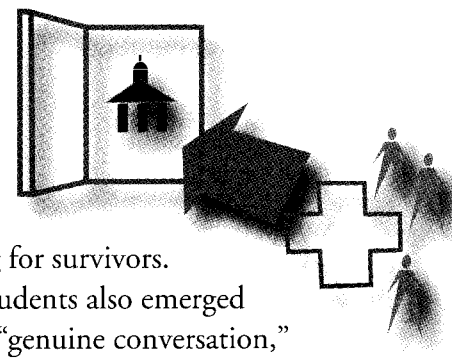
It occurred to me then that public thinking is like public grieving. They are both, to paraphrase Michael Sandel, what we can only know in common and do together. They arise from a narrative ground in which all of us are necessarily joined as neighbors, community members, and citizens when confronted by events and their implications that need to be shared. The scene at Union Square, however, was not a coherent public assembly. There was no convening group or agenda or deliberative process. People moved in and out, as I did from day-to-day, treating it like a greenmarket of fresh feeling and thought but without an outcome that anyone could know or report. There was public thinking here and there and from time to time, but it was not so much intentional as it was a by-product of the shock and grieving that brought people there in the first place.

At the time, I wondered if there would be opportunities in the days and weeks ahead for public thinking arising out of the events of September 11. Who would be convenor and what would be the agenda and process used? I thought perhaps my university and its new president would take the lead. Within a day after the attack, the university had been willing to open its doors to those seeking some word about their loved ones from a neighboring hospital. The university had provided hospitality and counseling for survivors looking for survivors. Ad hoc forums of faculty and students also emerged for what one facilitator called a "genuine conversation," and, for a time, many classrooms became places for story-telling and probing about what had happened.



As weeks passed, I found that public grieving in the university neighborhood evolved mainly into tender and impressive forms of public thanking and public giving. Just below Union Square in the 14th Street subway station and adjacent to a police squad office where two of its members were "missing," I saw tangible expressions of thanks and condolences of school children from Long Island to Texas. Their heartfelt messages extended down a white-tiled passageway for several hundred feet where, for example, the second grade class of Mrs. Riegal and Ms. Tree affixed their poster: "Dear Rescuers, You are our Heroes." It was just one of the many public spaces across the city where public thanking was on

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display to honor fire, police, and emergency personnel and in remembrance of their fallen colleagues. The public giving was everywhere in an outpouring of contributions, both spontaneous and carefully organized. A news account written near "ground zero" described an evangelical group from Louisville moving among small business owners and writing checks from $1,000 to $3,000 on the spot as a simple gesture of immediate help — no applications, no strings attached. By contrast, the same account quoted a spokesman for a more established charity who said that its response was "based on professional social work ... we're not trying to do something outside our expertise."[1]

The same professionalism could describe my university's response as it settled down to offering its resident expertise to civic coalitions, nonprofit agencies, and private employers. The most prominent effort was consumed with what should become of the devastated World Trade Center site. At a vast intersection of public and private interests, rebuilding lower Manhattan is seen as the most visible, if not the most pressing, challenge confronting the city. At the outset, it seemed that most of the pro bono experts took for granted that public officials legitimately represented the public in such matters, and those citizens most affected were seen as victims, not partners. Nonetheless, parents in schools near ground zero, a downtown coalition of residents, and those who lost loved ones on September 11 insisted that they have some say in the redevelopment. There was no special effort, however, that I could see where the experts were connecting with residents, small business owners, and displaced workers to deliberate on what should be done. When I mentioned such a possibility to a colleague dashing to the elevator, his response was "Oh, wouldn't that be ideal but you know as well as I do, David, that's not the way the system works." He just assumed that professional contributions were the most competent means available to whatever given end they served.

As the elevator doors closed, I didn't have the chance to point out an inconvenient fact his professional thinking often overlooks. Public ends are rarely "given," they must be constructed, and that is neither the job nor within the special competencies of specialists, academic or otherwise. Public thinking and professional thinking are not the same. At its core, public thinking is centered on ends, on the important questions of "Where are we going?" "Is this desirable?" "What should be done?[2] Such ques-

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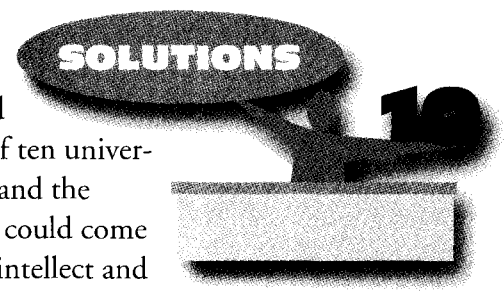
tions are just that — questions. They have to be shared before they can be answered. When you and I ask genuine questions, not rhetorical ones, we are looking for help. We are looking for others who can enlarge our understanding. The supposed shortcut that professionals take of looking at the data of individual opinion aggregated in poll surveys misses the point. Without questions to share, we only have our preconceived opinions and answers which are meager resources when confronted with problems beyond any one person's resolution. Public thinking, like public grieving, is not something that anyone can do alone.

Professional thinking does not operate in a vacuum either, but its forums often disappoint. In December, just up the street from Union Square, but a world away from the spontaneous and disordered ceremonies of public grieving, my university hosted a conference on "New York City at a Turning Point." In the lobby outside the auditorium, those on the invite list deposited their business cards in a glass bowl. They represented an array of urban organizations — academic, financial, philanthropic, civic, governmental. This weekday-morning conference was another occasion for these professionals to listen to their peers and network during coffee breaks. The university's president welcomed them, noting the significance of ten universities located near ground zero and the likelihood that those attending could come up with "solutions" given the "intellect and passions" in the hall. I couldn't tell if he was flattering them or whether he really believed that this university-hosted conference would provide some kind of policy breakthrough.



One of the academic presenters, a political scientist, spoke eloquently of a "civic conversation" under way, but it turned out to be the high-stakes lobbying she thought was needed in Washington, D.C., in conjunction with "mobilizing public opinion and educating them."

Another presenter, an economist from the Citizens Budget Commission recommended that the cost of the safety net to help low-income residents should be shifted from the city to the state because "it is the right thing to do." When I asked her during a coffee break whether her viewpoint reflected citizen input, she reminded me the commission had no such link except through its

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trustees.

The keynote speaker was an elected public official and candidate for governor who called for using a moribund financial control board, composed of the governor, mayor, state and city comptrollers, and three private sector representatives, to be an "open forum" for dealing with the serious fiscal problems confronting New York City. His speech was laced with references to community, the business community, the labor community, a "new community" in lower Manhattan but, except for the families of victims, he thought the question of what should be done with the Trade Center site belonged to those responsible for the financing. Like all the presenters, he acknowledged "public needs" without seeing a reason for public thinking about what those needs were or should be. Instead, he thanked the presenters for their data and forecasts and then moved to the lobby to take questions from the media.

... he thought the question of what should be done with the Trade Center site belonged to those responsible for the financing.

As I sat there listening to one presenter after another probe the economic and psychological consequences of September 11, I realized that they were as much at a loss as those I had been with in Union Square. But unlike the impromptu forums in the park, the conference presentations offered only the standard monologue with a perfunctory Q and A to follow. The conference-goers were there to learn but with little chance to participate. I thought to myself if New York City is "at a turning point," how can there be a productive exchange about the choices to be made in a darkened auditorium of note scribblers and PowerPoint presentations? It was like a bad classroom.

The format and work product of the conference was such a predictable standard for the discussion of public issues that no one thought to ask "but where is the public?" When I turned to express my concern about the absence of public thinking to a conference-goer from the city comptroller's office, she tried to reassure me that there was indeed a lot going on elsewhere, "multiple channels" as she called them, at school-parent associations and community boards. She could not reassure me, however, that such channels were intersecting with the professional thinking on display in the auditorium or with private sector stakeholders and public officials. When I raised the same concern with another conference-goer, he shrugged, "Oh, that's the stuff of public hearings, don't you think?"

How wrong he was. Public hearings are definitely not where

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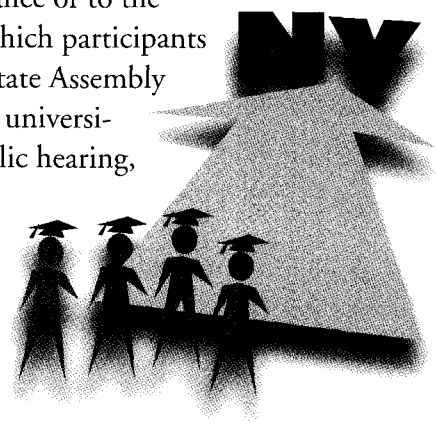
public thinking gets done. Testimony is taken, a record is made, but very little else is developed. Advocates, with their minds already made up, come to make a statement and, like the conference of professionals, listen to others make their statements. In neither venue is anything left to chance or to the development of a conversation in which participants engage each other. The New York State Assembly held a public hearing soon after my university's forum, and in the notice of public hearing, the chairs of four legislative committees announced that a "collective vision for the future of New York City can be developed only by listening to and learning from governmental agencies, public authorities, utility providers, other businesses and community groups impacted by the events of September 11th." They went on to stipulate that oral testimony would be limited to 15 minutes' duration. It was the public's turn with no time for public thinking.



After the conference, I headed back to Union Square. Part of it has become a parking lot for construction vehicles as the park is renovated. Another part is occupied temporarily by the red-and white-striped tents of tradesmen selling their holiday wares. The public grieving and public thanking and public giving has moved to other venues. But where are the venues for public thinking about the "what should be" questions? Where are the intersections for professionals and citizens still bewildered by what has happened, to sit down as equals and sort out what they can learn from each other and what they should do — together?

* * * * * * * * * *

It's February and this is only a postscript. I head downtown in a cold drizzle to something called "Listening to the City" sponsored by the Civic Alliance to Rebuild Downtown New York at the South Street Seaport. On the way, I learn that you need a ticket now to get on the viewing stand overlooking "ground zero." I'm told to go to Liberty Street to get one, but instead I turn down Fulton Street to Pier 17 at the Seaport.

I soon learn that the "Listening to the City" event, hosting 600

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New Yorkers, is intended as the "kickoff" of a two-year process of civic conversations. It will be a mix of professional/citizen focus groups and self-directed instruments of the Municipal Art Society as part of Imagine New York. Perhaps these will be new venues for public thinking that intersect with the self-described "community of professionals" who currently work the system as best they can to rebuild downtown New York. But that is another chapter for another Higher Education Exchange *issue. I'm still learning....*

References

1 "At Ground Zero, Gospel and Giving," *The New York Times* (December 1, 2001).

2 I was reminded of these essential questions when reading Bent Flyvbjerg's *Making Social Science Matter* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 60.

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NEW PUBLIC SCHOLARSHIP IN THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES:

An Interview with Julie Ellison

David Brown, coeditor of the Higher Education Exchange*, talked with Julie Ellison, professor of English at the University of Michigan, about how she views the use of public scholarship in her work as director of Imagining America (IA), a national coalition of artists and humanists at the intersection of higher education and community life.*

Brown: Your professional service and public work range from the Ann Arbor Rowing Club to the Prison Creative Arts Project. Is there any chronology that explains how you came to Imagining America? Did your academic work influence this chapter of your life?

Ellison: The chronology is, first, a taste for scholarly projects that connect unlike things; second, a stint as associate vice president for research, a job that let me operate not just within but also between campus units (with the support of then Vice President Homer Neal, an experimental physicist whose faith in unexpected energy transfers among human beings is as powerful as his love of subatomic particles). Finally, through that administrative platform, I found myself connecting to people outside the university. Central administration, especially for faculty in the humanities, offers a periscope that allows one to see above the surface of one's own department or discipline. I try to follow Stanley Fish's advice, "When anybody asks you to do anything, say yes."

Brown: Can I find intimations of your public work in Emerson's "American Scholar"?

Ellison: Yes, I think you probably can. I have always been an intense reader of Emerson, though I wouldn't describe my work as wholly celebratory of him. My first book, in 1984, was on Emerson, and I have written several articles about him since. My scholarly work, which led in broad transatlantic historical and theoretical directions, always was provoked almost physically by the lurches and skips and tonal swerves of the *Essays*.

My father was an editor and author who grew up in Chicago and majored in English at the University of Michigan, graduating

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in 1930. His mother, Vera, daughter of a Swedish shoemaker, had gentrifying ambitions. She got him into art classes, piano lessons, and so on. He remembered volumes of Emerson in their house, which he obviously read carefully. He absorbed both Emerson's moods of antiauthoritarian outrageousness and Emerson's surges of ambitious faith in personal agency. These are not, of course, Emerson's only voices, but they are the ones that descended to me through my family.

When I read "The American Scholar" in my current frame of mind, what I find is Emerson-as-Dewey — suggesting how much Dewey found in Emerson. Emerson's uses of the word "public" in "The American Scholar" are mixed, and interesting. He celebrates the rituals of "the literary year" as being an "anniversary … of hope, and, perhaps, not enough of labor." He offers labor and action as the engines of inspiration. And this leads him to his agenda for the public value of higher education. The "public importance," he says, of "our American colleges" depends on "wit," "thought," and "knowledge." And wit, for Emerson as for most romantic writers, is action. I love the way he talks about action as experience that is truth-making and language-making:

> Action is with the scholar subordinate, but it is essential…. Its attractions are the keys which unlock my thoughts and make me acquainted with myself. I run eagerly into this resounding tumult. I grasp the hands of those next me, and take my place in the ring to suffer and to work, taught by an instinct, that so shall the dumb abyss be vocal with speech.

The individual scholar materializes only in the "tumult" of social life, and knowledge is thought that flows into language. The scholar "lives on public and illustrious thoughts"; he must both "receive and impart" the human heart's "commentary … on the world of actions." The "new importance given to the single person," which Emerson celebrates, accommodated the socially immersed intellectual. "Forget this," he warns, "and our American colleges will recede in their public importance, whilst they grow richer every year."

Emerson saw the scholar as a masculine genius who translated back and forth between profound private intuition and the public

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voices of his age. I don't buy this. Still, I find myself thinking about how nineteenth- and early twentieth-century intellectuals defined genius in ways that we want to take seriously as part of our cultural history. For them, genius was an energy source that could inspire social hope, social labor, and social change.

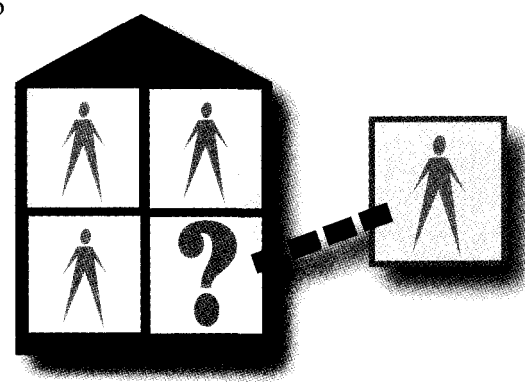
Brown: How is IA's Imagining Your State initiative organized?

Ellison: We asked ourselves, "How can we connect whole sectors within individual states — higher education, the public, and nonprofit arts and humanities?" We were looking for a simple organizing strategy. So we developed a Web tool called Imagining Your State as a way of promoting a meeting, once a year, of the state arts agencies, the state humanities councils and colleges and universities. Our partners in this were the Federation of State Humanities Councils and the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies.

Michigan has been a lab, in a sense. I am a board member of the Michigan Humanities Council, which already partners with the Michigan Council for the Arts and Cultural Affairs on some programs. So we developed a regional branch of Imagining America called — no surprise here — Imagining Michigan.

Brown: Have there been some success stories in Michigan?

Ellison: Yes, there have been. We featured several teams at our fall conference. For example, there is "Museums as Communities." The relationship between public museums and Native American communities often has been a difficult one. But for the exhibition Anishinabek: People of This Place, the Public Museum of Grand Rapids collaborated with 90 tribal elders, artists, and scholars to create a stirring show about a people's journey from frontier upheaval to the present. From interactive video interviews to family photos and native art, the museum, the local Native community and Native scholars cocreated an exhibition to remember. As a direct result of the exhibit partnership, other collaborative projects became possible. The Michigan Department of Transportation recently uncovered an Anishinabek archaeological site. The site was



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uncovered in the early phases of a major highway reconstruction in downtown Grand Rapids when portions of a crumbling bridge landed on a Grand Valley State University parking lot. Negotiating the needs of the Native American community, the Department of Transportation, and the university proved challenging but possible.

And then there is the Arts of Citizenship program at the University of Michigan. Arts of Citizenship supports a wide array of campus-community partnerships in the arts, humanities, and design in Southeast Michigan, including Ann Arbor and Detroit. For example, its Homelands Project brought together three generations of Southwest Detroit community members, who along with university staff and students, researched the history of this important, dynamic Hispanic neighborhood. The research led to a play, "Homelands," set for performance in 2002.

Brown: You have said that Imagining America remains open to finding "better strategies." What have you learned that can help you fashion or suggest such strategies?

Ellison: We are interested in better strategies of several kinds. First, we work hard to find out what people around the country are actually doing with campus-community partnerships in the arts and humanities, and to establish what is succeeding, what is sustainable. Clearly there are several excellent models available, ranging from publicly engaged humanities institutes, to curricula, to community partnership programs, and more. Our latest move is to redo our Web site so that we can actively gather information about such collaborations and make them available to everyone through a searchable data base.

There's a real need to find out what this unfolding set of practices and knowledge called public scholarship is.

There's a real need to find out what this unfolding set of practices and knowledge called public scholarship is. It's a new creature. We need to gather information about public scholarship in its current form, evaluate that information, and all the while advance new ideas and strategies. In areas like the humanities, collaborative work in any form is exceedingly rare, and there is no tradition of serious collaboration by faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates with community and public partners.

Among the better strategies we want to pursue are better approaches to evaluation and assessment. We don't want to study public scholarship using just social science survey methods of assessment that are remote from artistic and humanistic practices. We want to draw on qualitative and quantitative methods, including documentaries and ethnographies of the project, records

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of products like exhibits and performances and Web sites, and structured reflection by participants, along with salient quantitative information. And we want to find new genres for communicating our findings, genres that are adequate to the adventurous boundary-crossing temper of public scholarship and that result in publications that are useful and interesting to artists and humanists in and out of the university.

Brown: Could you say more about what you call "new genres"?

Ellison: The "new genre" would be a hybrid creation, a multiauthored, multidisciplinary production that documents, extends, and analyzes the work of campus-community teams working on the new public scholarship in the arts and humanities. It could be published in print or Web formats, incorporating (in various combinations as appropriate) maps, photographs, interviews, surveys, art work, personal responses, and stories, historical analysis, theoretical reflections, and policy recommendations. For a publication series on the new public scholarship, I would like to see the model of an editorial board of a traditional scholarly journal changed to include artists and humanists working within and outside of academic settings, including, for example, people based in schools, public libraries, museums, historical societies, theaters, city agencies, or foundations. These distinguished peers, all skilled in community partnerships in the arts and humanities, would be tapped to evaluate proposals and to review completed work, making recommendations on revision and publication. These strategies, it seems to me, would foster both excellence and experiment.

Brown: Last May in Dayton, you spoke of academics as "good adult learners." Could you expand on that thought in the context of your work?

Ellison: Well, isn't that what scholarship and creative work are, self-invented crash courses in a particular thing by grown-ups? Often we do this alone. But there are places of wonderful social learning. This happens when faculty and grad students with shared interests come together to read, talk, exchange work in progress, put on a conference or performance, and the like. Most people teaching in arts and humanities departments in higher education want to make their own culture, individually and in concert with their colleagues. I'd like to see people approach public scholarship in the same spirit — let's make this up

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together, let's master the new literacies it will require, let's find the people who know more than we do and get everyone into the same room.

Brown: You wrote that one of the outcomes of public cultural work through campus-community partnerships is the invention of "a common language." Could you say more about what that language consists of?

Ellison: In a nutshell, this common language is the result of the earnest work of translation, listening, and practicing the rare skill of saying what we are *for* as well as what we can *critique,* and the refusal by everybody to dumb anything down. Eventually all of this merges into a common culture, if you're lucky.

Brown: Can you use a specific example to bring this alive? Does "what we are for" apply to common objectives that make any critique secondary?

Ellison: I should separate these two ideas in order to make their connection clearer. First off, stating positive goals and aspirations ("what we are for") does not make critique secondary. To make something together — a teaching resource, a performance, an exhibit, whatever — a group of people has to claim the public value of the product. Academic critique is usually motivated by strong commitments to positive values, such as social justice, expanded literacies, a more inclusive canon, a more democratic vision of community. But academic talking and writing often operates — on conference panels or in scholarly articles and books — purely as critique of histories that thwart the realization of these principles.

When I'm collaborating with Chris Maxey-Reeves, a third grade teacher and my partner in the Poetry of Everyday Life Project, critique is also fundamental. It is a fallacy to think that crafting an outcome, a product, a public good requires you to leave your intellectual tough-mindedness at the door. Not so! But it works differently: critique is one component of an act of directed production. We go to the Ann Arbor Public Schools and the Ann Arbor District Library and to parents and kids saying "Please join us in this important work." Then we find ways to challenge university students and third graders to resist poetic clichés, for example, or to see

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through conventional ideas of beauty. On our field trip to a gritty urban park marked by the traces of the homeless people who live and sleep there, we work with the kids as they struggle to find words for their complex social knowledge of the homeless individuals who write fierce messages in multicolored chalk on the bridge. All of this involves encouraging critique as a response to aesthetic and social dilemmas. At the same time, we are not shy about proclaiming the power of inspiration, imagination, discovery, and feeling. Celebration and critique can be antithetical to one another — one can celebrate something to the point of suppressing conflicts or difficulties. This, we have to work to avoid. Excellent, honest partnerships grapple with finding the right balance of critique and celebration for a particular project. There's no formula. That's part of the work of making a common language and a common culture.

Brown: Michigan's departing president, Lee Bollinger was quoted in the *New York Times* as saying: "One of the great problems [of being a university president] is how to deal with the fact that you know so little about things that you're responsible for.... It's the absolute opposite of being an academic, where your entire life is spent making sure that no one will be able to ask you a question that you can't answer." Can you relate his observation to your work with Imagining America?

Ellison: Well, I must be approximating a presidential state of being, because my life is now an unending series of questions I can't answer. In fact, all of my scholarly work has been propelled by "what if" questions. What if we put two things together — texts, writers, traditions, issues — that have not been thought about in relation to one another before? What would that look like? My whole academic career has been designed to keep myself in a state of perpetual panic, plunging into fields (romanticism, eighteenth-century studies) in which I wasn't trained and had to start from scratch. For me, the point of being a professor is that I can live a life of incessant learning. Imagining America feels the same way. There seemed to be a whole region of collaborative practice connecting critical institutions in our society — schools, libraries, museums, theatres, colleges, and universities — that none of us really knew how to do or even to talk about. What is public scholarship for people who make and think about culture? Who knows? It's like the word "imagining" — in the present tense, we're always questioning and answering. But we never

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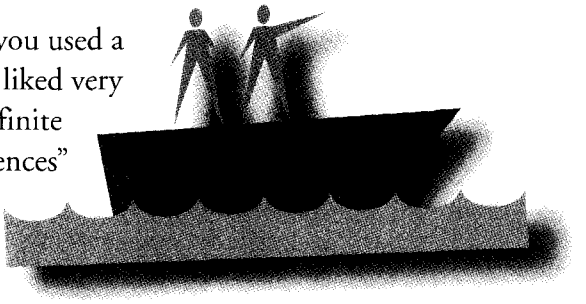
arrive — I hope.

Brown: Are you saying that the act of defining public scholarship should remain open-ended?

Ellison: Oh, yes, absolutely, our definitions have to be open-ended! Because our practices, our institutions, our media, our knowledge, and our relationships to power and place are themselves so fluid, so open-ended. When we started Imagining America, promoting campus-community partnerships was a bold idea. It still is, but now we know that there are many successful partnerships around the country. So now we find ourselves promoting excellent campus-community partnerships, sustainable programs that look beyond the economy of the single project, and so forth. Ideas take hold, one has the feeling of a knot releasing, and then you feel your way forward to the next tangle. It's a process.



Brown: Somewhere you used a "ferry" metaphor, which I liked very much, where people on a finite journey "talk across differences" and "make it a place of mutual transformation." What happens on that ferry that has the capacity to transform?

Ellison: I got the phrase, "shuttle zone," from a conversation with Jerry Yoshitomi, who led the Japanese-American Cultural Center in Los Angeles for many years. He got the term from his wife. She uses it to describe the space between an old paradigm and a new paradigm as two banks of a river, connected by a ferry. Some people who take the ferry are migrating permanently from the old paradigm to the new; some are migrating from the new to the old; others commute between new and old on a daily basis. The shuttle zone is the region inhabited by the person who works the ferry.

I want to be the person who works the ferry, or maybe the permanent commuter. The shuttle zone, for me, is the activity of collaboration that literally moves me into new locations — a third grade classroom, a public library, a legislator's office, a park — because I am working with people there on a specific collaborative project. One cannot work on the ferry without being multilingual, so translation becomes a crucial form of knowledge in this back-and-forth way of life. The shuttle zone comprises the work of

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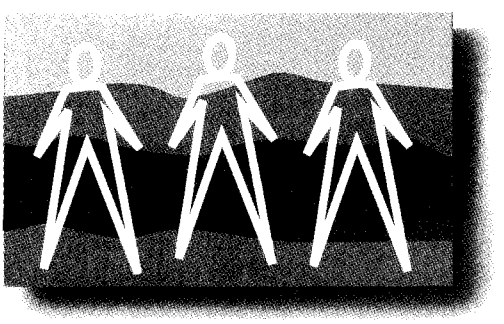
simultaneous translation necessary to making cultural stuff in a democracy.

Brown: Your *Imagining America* newsletter said that one of the goals is to "support concrete, long-term ways of supporting and rewarding faculty in the arts, humanities, and design who are involved in community projects." Have you found concrete ways to "reward" faculty?

Ellison: Rewards come once the work is done. The first step is to figure out how to make public scholarship doable. With fairly modest resources, a university can support an inventive, faculty-led program that fosters a rich scholarly and creative culture for university and community partners. Such a program can offer grants for faculty and graduate students, new kinds of courses, publication opportunities, public presentations, national and regional networking, and other forms of professional capital.

It is important to have some kind of infrastructure so that campus-community collaborations can grow beyond the one- or two-year enterprise of a couple of dedicated individuals. That leads to burnout, all too often. Projects, appropriately sustained, become chain reactions, moving into new phases with new partners. A local history project can lead to a new play, which can be accompanied by an exhibit in the theater lobby, which can migrate to exhibit space in the public library. The content of the exhibit, in turn, can develop into college and K-12 curricular resources, enrich a local history Web archive, and shape an academic publication.

As the zeitgeist changes, you can start to rearrange the conceptual map. We are used to thinking in terms of the holy trinity of faculty work: teaching, research, and service. This trio puts all publicly engaged projects in the "service" silo, or maybe, in the "teaching" silo, as community service learning. I like the model proposed by Doug Kelbaugh, dean of Michigan's Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning. The best campus-community projects, he says, "vertically integrate all three missions." This model combines scholarly and creative work, teaching and learning, and public goods into something like a lava lamp, where colors weave



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together in unpredictable flows. This offers an entirely different standard of excellence, one that, over time, can infiltrate "the reward system" in universities.

Brown: Could you offer an example of a community project that vertically integrates all three missions?

Ellison: Again, I know my own project best. The Poetry of Everyday Life Project fulfills the university's teaching mission, because it is built into my classes. I've done this project with first-semester freshmen and first-semester seniors, and graduate students have been involved, as well. It fulfills the university's public engagement, or service, mission, because it generates a product that benefits the community, in this case, art and language curriculum for third-graders and a program and exhibit for the District Library. Finally, it fulfills the university's research mission by fostering faculty scholarship. My work on this project, intersecting my long-standing scholarly interest in the history of British and American poetry, has led me to propose a new book project on public and civic poetry movements from 1880 to the present (for example, World Poetry Day, the Favorite Poem Project, high school performance poetry). The Poetry of Everyday Life has also stimulated my collaboration with the Bentley Historical Library, an archive for the State of Michigan and for the University of Michigan. Thanks to the efforts of Bentley staff, primary sources exhibiting the regional history of poetry are available through the library's Web site.

Institutions that make it possible for graduate students to integrate different kinds of intellectual and creative work … will discover that this can have a contagious effect on faculty.

Brown: You were talking about the "reward system"…

Ellison: Just a few more specifics: One important reward comes through graduate students, for whom departments compete aggressively. In the arts and humanities, many graduate students enter MFA or Ph.D. programs having worked for several years in cultural nonprofits, as teachers, artists, researchers, or communications or IT professionals. Very few research universities offer these students ways to connect their earlier professional practice with their advanced studies. Institutions that make it possible for graduate students to integrate different kinds of intellectual and creative work, such as public scholarship, will discover that this can have a contagious effect on faculty.

New genres of publication need to evolve as vehicles for the new public scholarship that are at once intellectually bold and broadly accessible. But first we need to figure out ways to make writing possible for engaged scholars and artists. When one's

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collaborators operate on a different calendar, and when one's research requires an ongoing presence in a joint project, the usual economy of production — writing during sabbaticals and summers — might not work.

Brown: At our meeting at Kettering, you spoke of new relationships among organizations as "additive and consistent with democracy." Do you have an example that would bring this alive?

Ellison: Hmmm. I like the phrase, I just can't quite remember what exactly I was thinking of when I used it. Maybe something like this:

Local, regional, and national networks of people and projects already form a fruitful ecology of public cultural work. How is that possible? Because beyond (or next to) the culture wars, we find the ground of a powerful but unrecognized cultural consensus. This consensus is not universal, but it is pretty big. The community of artists, humanists, and designers is knit together by core concerns and key themes shared across the cultural domain. Let me tick off some of these themes:

- a sense of place;
- citizenship and the public sphere;
- justice and ethics;
- the relationship between the local and the global;
- health and the body; and
- memory and storytelling.

For me, the "additive" logic of partnerships is based on the liberating discovery of expertise everywhere. Our common passion for these shared concerns are the true basis for campus-community partnerships.

Brown: Thank you, Julie.

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BUS RIDES AND FORKS IN THE ROAD:

The Making of a Public Scholar

By David D. Cooper

One consolation of finishing graduate work during the job market freeze-out in the late 1970s was the opportunity I had to experience, during a single semester, what struck me at the time as the full institutional spectrum of American postsecondary education. Facing unemployment lines jammed with fellow baby boomer academics and without the slightest prospect for a full-time tenure track position, I managed nonetheless to cobble together three part-time teaching jobs. After covering a couple sections of freshman English at Rhode Island College (RIC), I walked a few blocks through a working-class neighborhood in North Providence and caught the in-bound Smith Street bus. I hopped off a few stops later at Providence College (PC) where I taught another Composition course. Back on the bus, I transferred downtown to an East Side bus that groaned up the Benefit Street tunnel past the magisterial Unitarian Church and by "blue-blood" mansions. The bus dropped me off in front of Brown University's Rockefeller Library where I presided over a senior seminar in Religious Studies. I dimly imagined the bus ride as a symbolic journey along an institutional axis that defined the organizing polarities of higher learning in America. Even more important, could the bus ride, I wondered, hold the secret to a personal myth that would make some sense out of the fear, second-guessing, and inner turbulence I was feeling at the precarious threshold of a career?

In an odd way that I could not fully understand at the time, the bus ride forced me to navigate an existential tack between the extremes and contradictions of American higher education. There were, after all, none of the obvious restrictions, benefits, or pretensions of social rank at the open-admission state college where I taught Composition, as there were at the highly selective, richly endowed private university among my super-bright students in the Religious Studies seminar. At the same time, my working-

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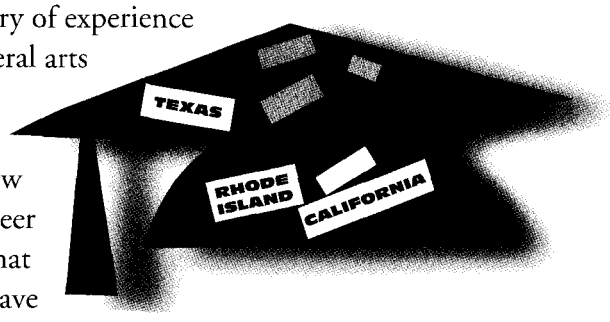
class students at RIC, even though they fumbled with the rudiments of language and argument in their essays on "Starsky and Hutch," were struggling (indeed, as I was) with the same perplexities of meaning, identity, and purpose as the Brown students who teased out their insights from the novels of Camus and George Bernanos. Meanwhile, to complicate matters my students at Providence College struck me as secure in a way that neither the RIC students or their Brown peers showed. Anchored in their Catholic tradition, the PC students' self-questioning, while just as energetic, seemed less open-ended and less edged by ambivalence during discussions about moral and ethical dilemmas that inevitably surfaced in all three classrooms that semester, whether we were probing the finer points in Sartre's *Nausea* or a segment from "Hawaii Five-0." Thanks to the PC students, I surprised myself with a willingness to defend the role played by institutional heritage, especially in the Brown seminar where theology was often treated like a problem instead of a solution.

In any event, I found the challenges and opportunities of that year morally bracing, pedagogically challenging, and intellectually stimulating. I appreciated the populism, the passion for democratic openness, and the educational pragmatism that suffused the climate of Rhode Island College. I respected the commitment to character education at Providence College. I admired the high intellectual standards and extraordinary motivation and drive of my Brown students. Even though I was denied the security, responsibilities, and perquisites of life on the tenure track, the bus ride from North Providence to the East Side was a practical education in what the humanities were all about: commitment to the social witness of ideas, intellectual community, and the arc of hope that scribes the moral lives of students. I felt, naively no doubt, a little like Walt Whitman setting out on the open road of American higher learning . . . egalitarian, energetic, and free.

Nearly a quarter-century of experience teaching in a number of liberal arts colleges and public research universities from Rhode Island to California and a few moments of serious mid-career reflection reveal, however, that my symbolic journey may have



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been, after all, only a bus ride. When I look back, trying to make some sense of the roads I have traveled since the patchwork of temporary teaching jobs in Providence, I see myself, like many other academics of my generation, facing hurdles, hitting roadblocks, wandering up cul de sacs, and eventually nudging into the clear. Most higher-education faculty, myself included, face the same pseudopredicament as the self-questioning traveler in Robert Frost's much-read and often-misunderstood poem "The Road Not Taken." At some point in our careers, we face forks in the road. One route, well paved and maintained, points to scholarship and research. Another leads to teaching. Bending to the underbrush, a third path, barely worn, fades off into service and the faint call of public work. In spite of institutional rituals and appointment, promotion, and tenure bylaws to the contrary, these routes remain, for most intents and purposes, separate pathways. Like Frost's traveler, faculty make their choices and stick to their career paths, "knowing how way leads on to way" and doubting "if I should ever come back" to take a different route.

For my part, I was dogged early on with persistent questions raised by a moribund job market on the one hand, and a nascent feeling for a dynamic and integrative learning life that stuck with me after the bus ride in Providence, on the other. Could I bring my "whole self" to a vocation in higher education? Could I practice a scholarship that nourished an active inner life, while forging strong and meaningful links to the public sphere? What would scholarship, teaching, and service look like if they supported both personal wholeness and the fulfillments of an engaged public life?

The decade of the 1980s was not kind to young academics in the humanities who charted a career course with those questions in mind. At least in my case, the generative impulses that naturally flow into teaching and service were quickly dammed up by the ethos of professionalism I encountered after leaving Providence for a string of adjunct teaching appointments from California and eventually to the upper Midwest. It is a species of professionalism familiar to critics of American higher education throughout the last century and culminating recently with critical voices that span a staggering ideological gamut, from Thomas Sowell to Camille Paglia. Thorstein Veblen, for example, launched a relentless early twentieth-century attack on university administrators he called "captains of erudition," whom he blamed for turning universities

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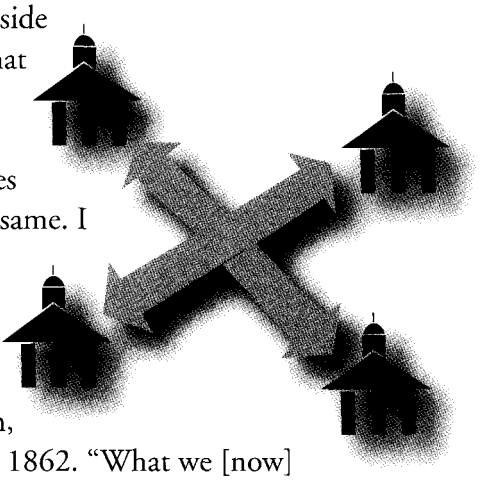
into professional/commercial bureaucracies fundamentally no different than banks and breakfast cereal-manufacturers obsessed with profit, status, and prestige. More recently, Christopher Lasch, writing through the pain of an illness that would eventually take his life, lamented an educational establishment paralyzed by moral inertia, theoretical abstraction, and a thinly veiled contempt for the public outside the academy. The closer I got to that establishment through the turnstiles of adjunct appointments during the 1980s, the more colleges and universities began to look the same. I am reminded of Wendell Berry's comments about land grant colleges and their wholesale shift in institutional values since the inaugural land grant legislation, the Morrill Act, passed into law in 1862. "What we [now] have," Berry writes, "is a system of institutions which more and more resemble one another, like airports and motels, made increasingly uniform by the transience or rootlessness of their career-oriented faculties and the consequent inability to respond to local conditions. The [contemporary] professor lives in his career, in a ghetto of career-oriented fellow professors."



This story of increasing isolation from public life and the prevailing sanction of professional recognition and reward has been particularly true of the humanities. A rising chorus of critics from both within and outside the academy complain about the humanities' abandonment of a historic mission to democratize public culture and to practice a discourse that illuminates and clarifies the moral and ethical dimensions of problems that beset civic life. Addressing contemporary academics generally and zeroing in on humanities professors in particular, the "new elite," as Lasch calls them in *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy*, "live in a little world of their own, far removed from the everyday concerns of ordinary men and women" and speaking an incomprehensible jargon that completely subverts any "attempt to communicate with a broader audience, either as teachers or as writers."

Meanwhile, our students started voting with their feet. While undergraduates were stampeding into business majors, the

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number of degrees awarded in the humanities began to plummet. In the mid-1970s, for every student majoring in English, five of her peers were pursuing degrees in Business Management. By 1994, that ratio sank to 1 out of 20. During the same period, humanists' teaching loads increased and their salaries proportionately declined. Release and research time steadily evaporated. Part-time and adjunct appointments swelled the faculty ranks while elite graduate programs, like mine at Brown, cut their yearly output of Ph.D.'s, on average, by nearly 30 students. It may be no surprise that SAT verbal scores have plunged. By 1998, an anemic 9 percent of students taking the PSAT indicated interest in the humanities.

I could not avoid the painful truth that I was setting out in a profession whose vital signs were bad ... and getting worse.

In spite of my youthful idealism and Pollyanna rationalizations, no matter how I sliced it, I could not avoid the painful truth that I was setting out in a profession whose vital signs were bad in 1978 and getting worse.

To compound matters, my liberal education led me to suspect a causal connection between the decline and discontent that wracked the humanities during the 1980s and 1990s and the loosening of the ligaments of democracy and civil society witnessed during the same period. "What do we see," Jean Bethke Elshtain bluntly asks, "when we look around [today]? We find deepening cynicism; the growth of corrosive forms of isolation, boredom, and despair; the weakening, in other words, of that world known as democratic civil society, a world of groups and associations and ties that bind." The power of the humanistic disciplines, I had been trained to believe, lies in their capacities to bridge private lives and public obligations — the inner and outer worlds — and enrich moral life, while simultaneously shaping a personal identity responsive to the commitments and responsibilities of citizenship in a democracy. That power has steadily waned during the last two decades only to be replaced by a corrosive academic professionalism that threatens to turn the academy, as Ernest Boyer puts it, into "a place for faculty to get tenured and students to get credentialed."

So it was against this backdrop that I began to chart a course through academe. It has been, and continues to be, a struggle played out in the moral realm where personal aspirations engage the larger professional community, and where personal career identity and responsibilities to public life are supposed to be worked out among a community of fellow practitioners/seekers. I

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floundered trying to find ways to reconcile the quest for self-purpose, aspiration, commitment, and self-respect — the larger rhythms, in other words, of an individual moral life — against those standards by which the profession regards me and, by extension, trains me to regard myself.

Like so many academics of my generation, those reconciliations were made difficult by the chronically depressed conditions of an insanely competitive job market in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s. After leaving Providence for the West Coast, I began my first full-time teaching job on a shoe-string contract as a "Visiting Lecturer" in the English department at a large public university. Even though my contract was renewed annually for several years, I remained cut off — it became clear to me from the outset of my appointment — from any hope of ever entering into the tenure system. I would never become a full institutional citizen and peer among the mostly older, tenured faculty in the department and the one or two lucky younger ones who had somehow slipped into the tenure stream right out of graduate school. A decadelong house guest in English, I was beginning to suffer acute ambivalence over what I had gotten myself into. In any event, convinced that I was a would-be scholar and teacher facing a hostile and unforgiving university, my inner world pitched headlong into the rapids of early mid-life crisis.

The institutional alienation and collegial dislocation I felt during that period, certainly extracted a serious toll on my professional, personal, and moral life. I was left with a residual skepticism over academic culture that, to this day, wells up on occasion and forces me to practice patience and restraint and seek the counsel of trusted colleagues, old mentors, intimates, and friends. But in spite of the difficult straits I found myself in during my turbulent thirties, nothing succeeded in completely undermining my basic commitment to finding what Thomas Merton called a "quiet but articulate place," where I could dig in, find my voice, and carry on a life's work.

In my not remarkable case, that search was, in part, foisted on me when I was dismissed from my visiting lectureship in 1988 and found myself back in the chaotic academic marketplace looking for work. I applied for a million teaching positions. As good fortune would have it, I landed one temporary two-year instructorship. After 14 hard years plying the adjunct teaching trade, I was soon hired into a regular appointment at the same

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university and awarded tenure within 2 years. It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that the terms of my professional renewal or emotional survival hinged solely on securing security of employment. An inner revolution was also taking place, spurred by ten years of identity confusion, role conflicts, and the inflated self-consciousness that comes from feelings of self-doubt. Granted a new beginning, my identity confusion gradually gave way to renewed purposefulness. I began to feel a pull of intimacy and belonging toward my new university. Integrity slowly replaced despair. An obsession with justice and fair treatment receded against a new awareness of and appreciation for the workings of mercy in my life. Promise and possibility appeared on a spiritual horizon once edged by dark feelings of stagnation and entrapment.

In particular, two new coordinates set the trajectory of my changing commitments as a teacher/scholar. First, the role that institutions play in shaping my identity and integrity became more important and obvious. While it is true that institutions sometimes betray us through rejection and, worse, indifference, they can also be, I sensed for the first time, important sources of affirmation, acceptance, and individuation. Second, a unitive spiritual and moral impulse began to inform and shape my intellectual and pedagogical work.

I began to realize that a life — especially a *teaching* life — lived outside of or free from the influence of institutions was more of an impoverishment than a virtue. Institutions of higher learning, by their very nature, shape us in profound ways. I still struggled, sometimes against strong currents stirred by old animosities, to become a better institutional citizen. But I also recognized the reciprocity between my individual strength and the larger mission and health of the public university that now employed me. I took on committee work, tentatively at first. I threw myself into curricular innovation. I shaped courses and learning projects that were consonant with the core values of my new university, a premier land grant institution. I even answered the call of academic service and took a temporary assignment as a program administrator.

More important, a harmonic drive began to pervade my calling as a teacher, my intellectual interests and worldview, as well as my philosophical inclinations. It was as if a new compass plotted my sense of moral direction. I became compelled to see the world around me and my place in it as a complex network of

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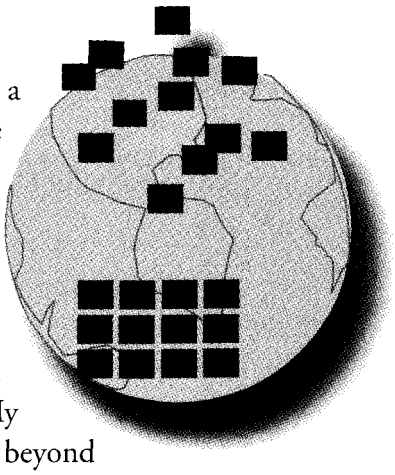

connections, integrations, balances, couplings, and ties that bind, and not a place of chaos, division, irreconcilable differences, and movement against the grain. Edward O. Wilson recently jump-started an old philosophical term to describe this condition. Underlying all forms of knowledge and ways of knowing is an urge to unity he calls "consilience." My new passion for connectivity went far beyond epistemology, however, and spilled over into an ecological lucidity that brought moral fluency across all sorts of boundaries. My teaching, in particular, fell under the influence of what Parker Palmer considers one of a teacher's greatest gifts, "a capacity for connectedness." The challenge and the burden of the classroom became, in Palmer's choice words, "to weave a complex web of connection" between myself, my subject, my students, and eventually my community and my scholarship "so that students can learn to weave a world for themselves. . . . The connections made by [such] teachers," Palmer wisely notes, "are not held in their methods but in their hearts — meaning heart in its ancient sense, as the place where intellect and emotion and spirit and will converge in the human self."

These two guiding forces — the call of institutional citizenship and an integrative impulse that forms the moral gravity of my worldview — have become the latitude and longitude of my current working life. As such, they have brought me into the national service-learning movement and the practice of public scholarship while forcing me to question and reevaluate my place in the contemporary humanities.

The passion for convergence, I should briefly explain, sets me at odds against a new generation of academics who have redefined the humanities agenda. While many academic fields are striving toward a vocabulary of disciplinary consilience, most humanities disciplines have taken a sharp opposite turn into postmodernism. Especially attractive are its explicit prohibitions against universal truths, its skepticism over all claims for connectivity and consensus, and its rejection of an Enlightenment discourse of "spirit," "heart," "will," and "human self" — a vocabulary, as one critic has it, that "reeks of the rotting carcass of

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liberal humanism." The strong ideological position staked out in new humanities fields like cultural studies, bolstered by curriculum reforms inspired by hard-line multiculturalism, are heavily colored by postmodern skepticism over the possibilities for integration, consilience, and the "public sphere." Bemoaning the hard inward turn of scholarship and postmodernism's "spectatorial approach" to the public arena, Richard Rorty warns: "to step into the intellectual world which [postmodernists] inhabit is to move out of a world in which the citizens of a democracy can join forces to resist sadism and selfishness into a Gothic world in which democratic politics has become a farce." I was drawn to the possibilities of public scholarship at a time when critical and theoretical underpinnings among new humanists were premised on liberation from suffocating notions of "public," "common" knowledge, and "common" truths — all routinely disparaged as oppressive grand narratives and dismissed as archaic cartoons and pernicious fantasies.

For many of my younger colleagues, in particular, the democratic ties that bind individual lives to the common welfare are now viewed, through the skeptical lens of postmodernism, as political shackles that oppress. A shared body of moral values that integrates a curriculum into a social order threatens to become, we are warned, a pretense for domination by privileged classes and groups. Moreover, an interdisciplinary curriculum that aims for balance, commonality, and synthesis, according to postmodern pedagogy, is really no different than a curriculum that seeks to eradicate differences, thereby reinforcing ethnocentrism, cultural hegemony, and class oppression. Just at the same time, then, as my own academic work and teaching life broke through into a new set of commitments to transcend difference and seek common ground with others, my humanities colleagues were becoming far less concerned with the spirit of integration. They were much more preoccupied with ideology, identity politics, power, and the anxieties of the academic culture wars. Having emerged from the throes of personal crisis and professional divisions, I was bent on nourishing the fragile bond between the inner life and ethical responsibility to work, institution, and community — the essence, I believe, of a humanities education. Meanwhile, the disciplinary venue where I was situated to carry out my new work had become mental, abstract, contentious, and theory-driven.

In many ways, my beef with the contemporary humanities

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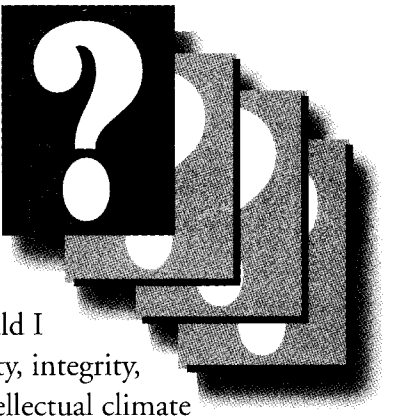

reinvigorated some long-held commitments with important questions. How, for example, could I renew my own writing with the capacities and qualities of humanistic inquiry that I profess theoretically and defend in the abstract? How could I teach and write with moral clarity, integrity, authenticity, and heart in an intellectual climate that had become much too cerebral, too much "in the head"? Where could I find a community of fellow practitioners for whom the inner life, ethical commitment, and generative responsibility are central to career and not objects of derision or signs of philosophical bad faith? How could I find my way to common work in the university with its intellectual climate clouded by suspicion over consensus, commonality, and community?

Such questions compelled me to conduct wide-ranging examinations of civic and democratic purpose as they relate to curriculum, scholarship, and my own sense of self-purpose as a member of my community and university. I emerged from my season of professional disappointments with a renewed generative commitment and a greater capacity and need to build connections with others. I was also looking for ways to integrate what struck me as an artificial and even hypocritical division of academic life, into the separate boxes of scholarship, teaching, and service. I was especially eager to explore avenues of service and find ways of becoming a participant in community and not, as I had been virtually my whole life, a spectator and critic quick to point out the failings and shortcomings of social life from my self-imposed vantage point, safely on the societal fringes. In addition to suiting up for community life, I wanted to integrate practices of service back into teaching and scholarship. Like many academics, however, I lacked a vehicle through which I could transform my teaching and scholarship into concrete expressions of social and moral action. *"How could I be of service?"* Now that I had gained a foothold on career security, I also lacked a model I could apply to integrate the professional pathways of teaching, research, and service. I found that vehicle and that model in service-learning pedagogy and philosophy, in a socially engaged scholarship, and in civic partnerships and community-based learning and research

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practices that I easily recycled back into the challenges and rewards of curriculum-development work and program building.

First, I parlayed the precious franchise of tenure into an assignment as editorial consultant to the Center for Urban Affairs at my university. The outreach scholarship practiced by urbanists, public policy analysts, community activists, and graduate students pursuing degrees in community and economic development offered me new outlets and opened new intellectual horizons. I began experimenting with a public scholarship and a language of engagement that countered the theoretical and self-referential turn of work in my home College of Arts and Letters. It is a brand of public scholarship familiar to readers of the *Higher Education Exchange*. Scott Peters, for example, offers a simple litmus test of "how a scholar's work of constructing and communicating knowledge might contribute to community-building, to public problem solving, to public creation, and to the process of coming to public judgment on what ought to be done. . . to address important public issues and problems. . . ." David Brown speaks of "'interrogating practices' that help citizens break through the proprietary languages of academics so that their specialized vocabularies can be made intelligible, be reflected on, and used without license by nonspecialists."

Gradually, a wealth of new opportunities presented themselves where I could ply my modest talents as an editor, teacher, and writer and practice a nontechnical prose accessible to the world outside the academy. I designed, for example, a practicum for graduate students interested in applying public literacies to their theoretical and quantitative fields. I edited the proceedings of a statewide summit meeting on the future of Michigan cities sponsored by the Michigan House of Representatives' Bi-partisan Urban Caucus. I helped plan the programs for Summer Institutes offered to community-based organizations and local nonprofits on such topics as closing the digital divide and creating sustainable communities. I wrote public policy briefs. I created opportunities for English majors to work as staff writers for community outreach units that specialized in youth and families, minority empowerment, education, and health and human services. Given my new working relationships with community partners, it was an easy and logical step to design and implement a general-education writing program back in my home department that featured community-based writing placements

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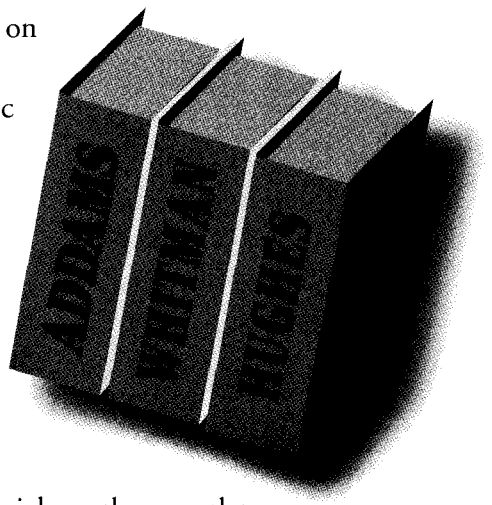
and a curriculum that centered on civic life and writing in the public interest. I joined with a colleague and we published a comprehensive curriculum-development resource guide for other writing teachers that included theoretical, historical, and rhetorical analyses along with practical tools and a portfolio of sample student projects. With a diverse group of colleagues from across the country, I took part in a research seminar on democracy and deliberation in higher education, sponsored by the Kettering Foundation. Community-based learning and research, in short, fulfilled my continued longing for relevant public work. Moreover, my own research agenda was energized by the fresh enthusiasm I had for a socially engaged scholarship. I brought renewed interest, for example, to the strand of democratic humanism that runs through American civic life from Tocqueville to Martin Luther King, Jr. I examined the Settlement House movement and civil rights-era Citizenship Schools as historic hubs of civic education and applied humanities. I published articles on public philosophy, moral and civic literacy, rhetoric and public discourse. I wrote essays for more popular venues on liberal education, engaging young people in democratic practices, and the humanities and public life. Old voices spoke anew — Jane Addams, Walt Whitman, John Dewey, Langston Hughes.



In short, I found a way to pick up the gauntlet Ernest Boyer threw down in *Scholarship Reconsidered*: "Can America's colleges and universities, with all the richness of their resources, be of greater service to the nation and the world? Can we define a scholarship in ways that respond more adequately to the urgent new realities both within the academy and beyond?" I entered as fully as I could into the public dimensions of the humanities. I believed for the first time in years that the humanities could play a public role envisioned by Jane Addams at Hull House: as a means of inviting citizens to be interpreters of their own lives, while bringing critical resources like analysis, reflection, deliberation, and ethical action to bear on social and

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cultural renewal. At the same time, I underwent a more introspective sounding of my own moral life. I came to terms with questions that had vexed me. How can I redirect my scholarship into a life of meaningful service? Or refashion my service into reputable scholarship? And transform my teaching into both?

At the risk of overstatement, I have to say that community-responsive teaching initiatives and my gradual retooling as a public scholar made me *whole*. They provided a parallax, as Robert Frost puts it, to "unite / My avocation and my vocation / As my two eyes make one in sight." They gave me a kind of template for professional integration just when I needed it to kick-start a career marked by enough conflict, separation, division, and isolation. I was able to find a way to act on the integrative drives that accompanied my professional reprieve. Public scholarship and service-learning put Humpty Dumpty back together again by converging the separate pathways of scholarship, teaching, and professional service into the thoroughfare of an integrated professional and personal life.

That convergence calls me back to the late 1970s and my stint as an itinerant composition teacher crisscrossing Providence on a bus, making connections — literally — between such seemingly disconnected classrooms, neighborhoods, and institutional missions. Crouched in the high anxieties of career uncertainty, I knew then — faintly, tentatively, quizzically — that this is what I really desired: the ethical life of service, intellectual stretch and challenge, and the call to moral duty. Twenty-five years later, I find myself on a bus ride with tenure, a witness to T.S. Eliot's culminating wisdom in the *Four Quartets:*

We shall not cease from exploration

And the end of all our exploring

Will be to arrive where we started

And know the place for the first time.

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AN ORGANIZING APPROACH TO TEACHING

By Phillip H. Sandro

How can teaching be conceived of as public and democratizing? What does that mean? There is some recent research on teaching and learning that converges with older literature and practice in experiential and critical education that begins to shed light on these questions. This research implies a set of approaches to teaching that are similar to what effective organizers do. I'd therefore like to make the case for an "organizing approach to teaching." Why? Because I think it can create shifts in political identities, catalyze new conceptions about democracy and citizenship for both students and faculty and develop skills to better address some debilitating fetters on U.S. democracy. Some of these fetters include a growing sense of powerlessness and cynicism, a retreat into privateness and away from participation in the public sphere, a deepening culture of detachment in academia and increasing levels of inequality and growing disparities in power among social groups in the United States. Embedded in my argument are framing conceptions about democracy, citizenship, and ways of knowing, conceptions that I will identify and discuss later.

I currently direct and teach an off-campus, credit-bearing, semesterlong, college-level program called the Metro Urban Studies Term (MUST) sponsored by a group of 15 colleges called the Higher Education Consortium for Urban Affairs (HECUA). I've been a community organizer and have been active in community development efforts. I have practiced the skills of organizing and teaching for years, but despite that I had not explicitly discovered their shared attributes until I delved into both during a sabbatical in 1999. I will draw from literature in this essay but I will also draw on my own experiences as a teacher and an organizer.

What has surprised me is how recent research on teaching and learning coming out of the Carnegie Institute for Teaching and Learning, the American Association of Higher Education and other sources resonates, albeit less politically, with prior writing by educators historically associated with experiential and critical edu-

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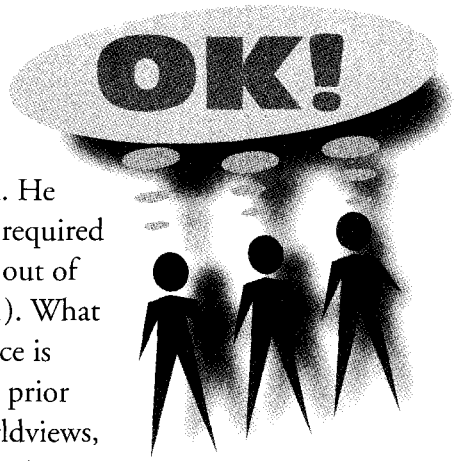
cation such as Dewey (1938), Miles Horton, Paolo Frierie (1990) and bell hooks (1994) among others.

In *Education and Experience*, Dewey argued that the most effective way to create educative *experiences is to engage students in collectively* solving problems that are deeply important to them. He also argued that solving problems required the continual making of meaning out of ordinary experience (Dewey, 1971). What this also means is that all experience is mediated through the filter of our prior meaning systems; knowledge, worldviews, models, and theories and that these interpretive mechanisms are subject to continual change. Dewey defines *interaction* as the relationship between a person's inner experience and the world outside. The inner experience of a learner and the outside world always interacts *but is not often deliberately connected by teachers in their methods.* By *continuity* Dewey means that any given experience influences the nature of all subsequent experience. For Dewey, an educator must connect the inner interests of the student with what is being taught about the world (interaction) in the form of a compelling problem in a way that begins with subject matter contained in students' life experiences and develops into richer and more organized form expanding what students know (continuity).



When one compares this to Horton and Freire (1990), hooks (1994) Palmer (1987), and recent cognitive and developmental research (Ewell, 1997), there are many similarities. They all say, in one way or another, that for learning to stick and create the capacity and interest for more learning, the inner and outer worlds of students need to be connected in the context of real life, compelling, often public, problem solving.

The notion that we interpret social reality by reflecting though interpretive mechanisms (lenses) is also not new. Dewey (1971), Berger and Luckman (1966), and the whole field of interpretive social science have argued this for years. What good teachers do is help students reflect deliberately and critically about their interpretive mechanisms in order to act effectively in the world.

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Organizers as Educators

I want to stress here that almost every one of these points pertains to organizing. Organizers actively engage community members in collective problem solving. They catalyze communities to be able to act with effect. Another way of putting this is that they help build a community's power and their ability to use it to change or cocreate something that has public significance. While organizers don't use the terms "interaction" and "continuity," I would argue that in all approaches to organizing — the effective organizer does both. First, regarding interaction, an organizer must find ways to activate people into participation in the public sphere. This is approached in many different ways by organizers. When successful, however, this usually entails connecting the inner needs, passions, anger, values, ideals, motivations, and felt issues and capacities of individuals with others in the community that share similar sentiments. A good organizer listens deeply and prospects for a critical mass of people with overlapping interests. This is conceptualized in many organizing circles as establishing a community's collective self-interest, thought of not as selfishness or selflessness but self among others (Pierce, 1984).

In terms of continuity, effective organizers engage actors and constituencies where they are at building their capacity and growth with an eye toward the many potential directions they may wish to go. Therefore an organizer, like a good teacher, introduces or encourages new knowledge most effectively if they select those things that can be understood using the range of people's existing experiences and then build on them.

Good organizers are increasingly seeing continual learning and theory-building as essential to act effectively. In turn, they see reflection on their actions in light of results as key to continual learning (IAF, 1990).

Therefore teaching, like organizing, is highly relational. The notions of problem solving in the public sphere, interaction and continuity in teaching, and parallel notions in organizing mean that both teachers and organizers must develop the capacity to know their students and community members respectively. Teachers must be highly relational if they are to negotiate reciprocal partnerships doing shared work that provides problem-solving outlets for their students. However, I argue as have many others before me, that this approach to teaching is not rewarded in the dominant culture of academia (Boyte, 2000). This is, therefore, a

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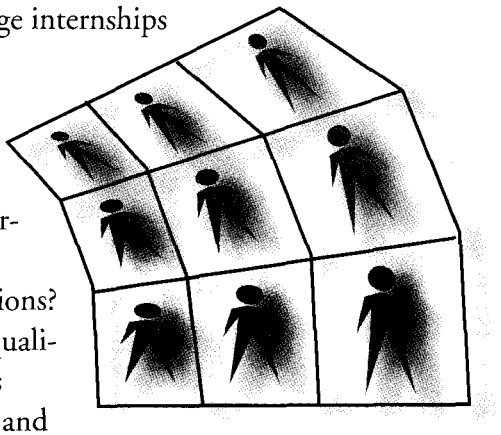
challenge for individual teachers as well as for the institutions that employ them.

The Metro Urban Studies Term at HECUA

Located in St. Paul, Minnesota, MUST focuses on multiple ways of understanding poverty, inequality, and social change by engaging students in a highly integrated web of theoretical work, field work, and social change internships in the public sphere.



There are three major framing questions to the program. First, what are some of the root causes of increasing levels of poverty and inequality experienced by people in major metropolitan regions? Second, how do poverty and inequality persist? Third, what are various approaches to addressing poverty and inequality and how does one critically evaluate them?

There are four components to the program; a Reading Seminar, Field Seminar, a 20-hour-per-week internship, and an Integration Seminar. All four components are interwoven to explore the three framing questions mentioned above. For example, in one segment we examine the economic roots of inequality and poverty. One issue we explore in this segment is the loss of unionized manufacturing jobs in U.S. cities and the rise of services. In the Reading Seminar we explore multiple theoretical explanations for this issue. We ground these theories in the Field Seminar by having conversations with Honeywell corporate executives who explain, from their point of view, why they have moved urban unionized jobs to Mexican free trade zones. Then, again in the Field Seminar, we converse with labor organizers working with Mexican immigrants, many of whom fled poverty in the Mexican free trade zones where many manufacturers, including Honeywell, have moved their once-unionized factory jobs. We may have a student doing an internship with that same union that is organizing Mexican and other immigrant workers in a hotel. This internship integrates directly with this segment of the program and indirectly to many other segments. This student would then bring his or her experiences to the Integration Seminar in a way that enriches the Reading Seminar theory and the conversations in the Field

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Seminar. All internships must have connections to the curriculum so that aspects of the internship integrate with the Reading and Field Seminars.

The weekly Integration Seminar involves structured reflection utilizing writing assignments, simulations, learning circles, and simulations with the intention of integrating all components of the program. I should note that although this is a fully integrated, semesterlong off-campus program, teachers can embed fieldwork and other forms of practical work and integrate it with theory in an on-campus course. Some universities and colleges around the country are creating the institutional support for faculty to do this.

The MUST program increases the likelihood that students will encounter and grapple with problems they care about through internships, semesterlong group study projects doing public work and a holistic approach that encourages students to explore what their learning means for their place in the world. Our students have worked with welfare mothers co-organizing for better policy and have developed an econometric tool to measure the impact of the North American Free Trade Agreement on Minnesota. They have worked with Hmong immigrants to get a Hmong Veterans Bill passed and have organized mayoral and school board candidate forums in the Hmong and Hispanic communities. They have organized with community organizations and unions, and worked with local community development corporations developing affordable housing. They have coached elementary and high school students as they learn the skills of democratic social change. They have helped to decrease the amount of home-based lead that children are exposed to and have organized to prevent homelessness.

All of this public work has been done through a web of partnerships among HECUA and numerous organizations. The key is that students choose their internship and group study projects based on a variety of interests, values, passions, and expectations they have. The only parameter is that their choices lend them-

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selves to theoretical and practical issues in the curriculum.

The HECUA Model as "Context for Meaning"

Because students choose their internships and group study projects they usually become deeply engaged. They encounter the many messy contradictions, issues, and problems of creating change and doing democracy in the real world. They thus need to make meaningful and interpret their experiences in order to be effective. Because they cannot escape experiencing these issues through an interpretive mechanism (lens), MUST provides an interpretive critical thinking tool we call a "context for meaning."

By providing a "context for meaning," we essentially mean doing the following three things in conjunction with the students' work in the community:

First, we introduce students to basic metatheory, or theory about theory. We stress that we experience everything through an interpretive mechanism or lens. An interpretive mechanism or lens can consist of worldviews, theories, models, stories, ideology, and other forms of meaning and prior knowledge (including our own HECUA model and its "context for meaning"). Many of these are socially constructed, connected to systems of power and are, therefore, not politically neutral (Berger and Luckman, 1966). In addition, interpretive mechanisms are partial and selective. That is, they highlight certain aspects of social reality and leave out or underplay others.

The second part of creating a context for meaning is providing students with a number of alternative interpretive mechanisms (models, theories) through which experience can be filtered; conservative, liberal, Marxist, feminist, indigenous, commonwealth and others, for example. We try to make these as explicit as possible for purposes of critically thinking about effective action on problems in the world that students encounter in internships, field experiences, and with theory itself.

The third element in creating a context for meaning is asking students to practice using the metatheory I've just described. In all their written assignments and discussions, they are asked what is the lens you are working with? What version of reality does it give you? How is it partial and selective? What does it clarify? How useful is it to you and others as you engage with real work in the community? What can't it do? Whose interests does it serve? Who might it marginalize?

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There has, of course, been much debate in many fields of inquiry about the extent to which people can "know" and critically analyze their interpretive mechanisms (Heiddeger, 1967; Lyotard, 1984; Marcuse, 1968). I argue however, that to *whatever* extent people *can* know and critically analyze their interpretive mechanisms, that they are socially constructed and, therefore, political in nature. As a result, critically analyzing them for their cultural and political significance is essential if indeed people are to "read" the world in a way to effectively solve problems, especially social and political problems. We actually hope that students will consciously experience themselves as theorists and theory-builders and critically integrate theory and experience.

We actually hope that students will consciously experience themselves as theorists and theory-builders and critically integrate theory and experience.

Democratic and Civic Implications of Research on Teaching and Learning

I began with the claim that an organizing approach to teaching could begin to address some debilitating fetters on U.S. democracy. Certainly notions of collective problem solving in the public sphere, and teaching methods and ways of knowing that are engaged and not detached, offer some promise of creating a more civically engaged form of education. They *do*, day by day give voice to students by affirming their passions and concerns and connecting them to outlets for solving problems they care about. They *do* help students understand the usefulness of knowledge and learning because they apply this knowledge. They *do* strengthen students' analytical ability by helping them think critically about interpretive frameworks. Thus, they *do* help students to become more powerful actors in the world. But these effects are not sufficient alone to argue that teaching done in this way has democratizing potential. While significant, one can't fully make this claim until one clarifies one's own lens or framework about what constitutes democracy and citizenship and what education is for. These have long been interconnected and contested terrains.

These are in part normative questions yet they nonetheless have important political ramifications. Every school, college, and university may choose to struggle with these questions. I admit to struggling with these questions myself and will share some of my thoughts on them below. But these are good questions and this is a good struggle to have because how one answers them influences what kind of world one envisions and how one will act to create it.

The commonwealth tradition of democracy combines populism and pragmatism. Proponents of this tradition tend to locate

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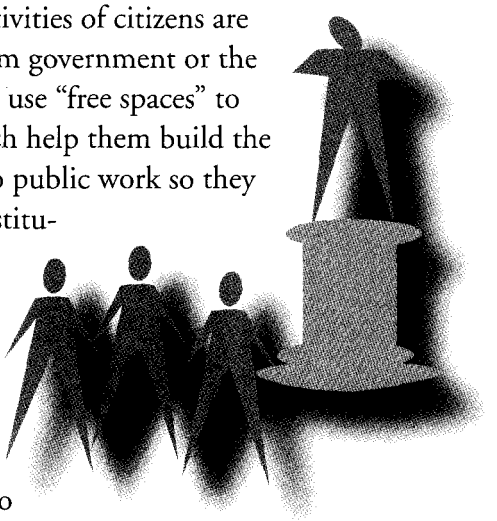
themselves in the social justice camp but eschew distributive justice as a *primary* goal of the state or political activity. Current proponents of the "commonwealth perspective" argue that ordinary citizens can develop the craft of citizenship to do extraordinary things. This takes power and the activities of citizens are not to be hermetically sealed off from government or the private sector. Ordinary citizens can use "free spaces" to build "mediating institutions," which help them build the power to get them to the table to do public work so they can influence and coproduce the institutions and environment that are part of daily life (Boyte and Kari, 1996).



There are also conceptions on the political Left. Ideologically, the Left ranges from modern Liberalism (i.e., leftist Democrats) to Marxist radicalism and anarchism. What many Left tendencies share however (to varying degrees), is the belief that one of *the preconditions* of a true democracy is a decrease in massive inequalities that are seen to lead to vast differences in political power by allowing the economically powerful to disproportionately influence the modern *political* rules of the game (Cohen and Rogers, 1983; Collins and Yeskel, 2000).

I struggle with these two frameworks, the Commonwealth and Populist Left, but believe they both have very important contributions to make to a vision for democracy and education for democracy.

The strength of the commonwealth perspective is its elevation of the average citizen to the active and authoritative status of producer of the commonwealth. It is primarily a theory of human agency that sees citizens as active producers not passive consumers. It has roots and a vernacular that lie deep in U.S. history and culture and may, therefore, not seem alien to U.S. citizens. It has a strong critique of the modernist state. Boyte and Kari criticize the modernist, technocratic, bureaucratic State arguing that it is run by experts and professionals who produce and deliver government services to citizens who, in turn, internalize a view of themselves as passive consumers or clients. This, in turn, disempowers and atrophies citizens' confidence to participate in the public sphere and weakens their political muscle whether in European social democ-

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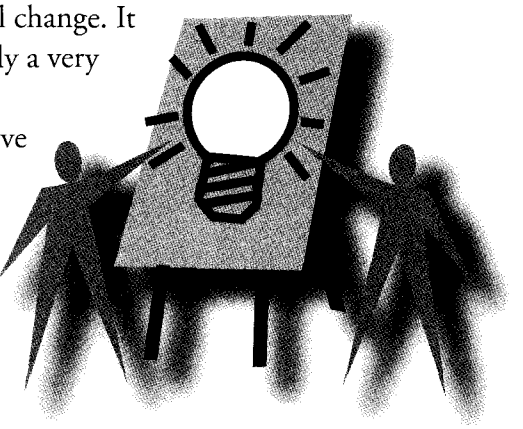
racies or in the U.S. The commonwealth framework encourages citizens to see themselves as having the authority to do public work. This is an important part of civic education. It goes beyond the "civics" conception of democracy. This is not just "doing for" others as in the civil society conception of democracy. It goes beyond service to encompass social change. It is cocreating society. It is potentially a very radical idea.



However, like most interpretive frameworks the commonwealth perspective is partial and selective. While Kari and Boyte do point out that much of the commons has been privatized and point to some major issues in the world, I argue that what the commonwealth perspective does not highlight very well are political-economic structures that undermine democracy. I do not believe that Boyte and Kari would ever say that this analysis isn't important but they do not explicitly argue that it should be part of citizenship education. They *do* encourage the activity of power mapping and structural analysis on a very local basis in the tradition of community organizing. This is a very valuable skill for citizens. This skill and the kind of engagement that Kari and Boyte encourage are also the kinds of activities which may build people's collective self-confidence so that they might look at and grapple with the larger macrostructural impediments to democracy. Helping activate people from passivity and powerlessness to local engagement, self-confidence, and a sense of empowerment is critical in this time of cynicism and passivity. But I argue that this is only part of what should be included in education for citizenship. I argue that structural analytical skills should also be part of education for democracy.

What the various Left perspectives highlight in their theories of democracy tends to be macrostructural political-economic power analysis that helps citizens understand the nature of the barriers to full democratic participation and the nature of even local issues. There is a danger in *not* doing this kind of analysis. The danger is that even in intensely local and place-based work, macrosystemic dynamics are at play. Ignoring structural analysis may lead to faulty strategy. Ignoring structural analytical skills

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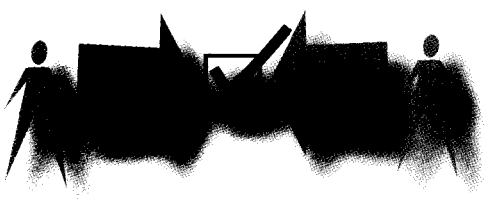
may also undermine the ability of people doing local work to learn how to build on local accomplishments to take even more democratic authority into their hands on larger structural issues once they experience success in the kind of locality development encouraged by Boyte and Kari. Thus, for both local and larger structural change work, structural analysis should also be part of educating for citizenship and democracy. I say this with an important caveat. Extreme versions of structural analysis leave very little room for human agency. On the other hand, to do none is flying blind.

What various tendencies on the Left have not highlighted very well is a strong theory of human agency. The Left, particularly the Frankfurt School, *has* pioneered explanations for why the masses *have not* fundamentally addressed major issues of inequality in the post-WW II era. While many on the Left have done local work, they have not developed a theory or practice of empowering people en mass to get from local work to tackling larger issues. This is not to minimize the Left's involvement and influence in the civil rights movement, stopping the Vietnam War, organizing unions, and currently addressing global injustices. Nonetheless, while Left thinking analyzes these larger issues rather well, the Left's ability to help people move from private to public, from local to larger issues has been on the decline. But I should note again that some tendencies in *both* of these traditions have blended in some U.S. social movements and share a common heritage. The Populist movement that supported Eugene Debs' socialist campaign for President, some of the early and current union movements' activities and early community organizing efforts come to mind.

I would also argue that these two traditions need each other for they have complementary strengths. The language of the commonwealth tradition connects to longstanding cultural traditions in the U.S. and the skills learned in local public work are highly important building blocks for larger social change efforts. The Left's focus on structural analysis provides structural analysis that increases effectiveness in both local and more broad-based work.



I firmly believe that just doing democracy does not a democ-

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racy make. Neither, however, does economic equality by itself. My argument here is none other than the classic structure vs. agency debate in social science. Those on the Left tend to attribute social outcomes, e.g., poverty or lack of democracy primarily to structural constraints. Those on the Right have traditionally tended to attribute social outcomes primarily to a lack of human agency or the wrong kind of human agency. While not on the political Right, Boyte and Kari argue that the major obstacle to democracy is that people carry around the wrong mental map of what it is (which leads to the wrong kind of human agency). Cornel West in *Race Matters* (1994) urges citizens to examine the inter-relationship between oppressive structures in society and how people act (human agency). I think there is wisdom in that suggestion and these two maps or interpretive frameworks of democracy when combined, do that. This is not to say that there are not some contradictions between the two.

I have struggled with these questions in the evolution of the MUST. But I think the program does encompass the theory and practice of human agency (how to activate citizens to do democracy) as well as understanding how social structures operate and interact with how people act and make change. We stress the connections between global and local dynamics. We encourage students to do local work but to be informed by how global dynamics are at play in that work. Students also work on global justice issues, as well.

There has always been debate about the purpose of schools and higher education. In the post-WW II and Cold War era, higher education venerated science to the detriment of democracy according to Boyte and Kari (2000). More than ever, "It shifted authority from citizens and placed it in the hands of experts who saw themselves as a class outside the people" (Boyte, 2000). The current civic renewal movement in academia has primarily taken the form of the civil society approach that stresses volunteerism and "doing for" others. This is the so-called "service learning" movement. But this movement is not monolithic any more than the Left or the Commonwealth traditions are. But the notions of democracy that inform civic education is contested terrain. The questions of how to conceptualize and do democracy are at play both on campuses and in the broader society.

How or if particular educational institutions will respond to these questions depends on multiple factors. But the likelihood

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that these questions will at least *stay* in play increases to the extent that we move from a detached model of scholarship where students are treated as passive vessels to be filled, to a problem-posing, relational, publicly engaged critical pedagogy that connects students to public work that they hold to be meaningful and significant. This requires an organizing approach to teaching.

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MAKING SOCIAL SCIENCE MATTER

— Bent Flyvbjerg

Laura Grattan, Reviewer

Humanities scholars and social scientists have entered the conversation about the role of scholarship in public life with a variety of goals in mind. For many, the search for a more public scholarship is a philosophical inquiry about what knowledge is, how it is produced, and what claims it can make to objectivity and truth in matters of human affairs. For others, it is a political exercise aimed at figuring out where academic knowledge fits in developing the practical wisdom that drives democratic decision making. Many more have pragmatic concerns, since the humanities and social sciences must regularly defend their relevance to a society that gives primacy to scientific and technical knowledge. For most of these scholars, whatever their perspectives and goals, the conversation about a more public scholarship is a personal one. At stake in the development of that scholarship and in the acceptance of scholarship by society is what most trades already enjoy: the ability of scholars to contribute, through their daily work, to the everyday workings and, potentially, to the social and political growth of their communities.

Bent Flyvbjerg, professor of planning at Aalborg University, Denmark, entered academic life with a sense that his work in the social sciences could improve the political workings of his local, national, and global communities. He decided to base his research, which focuses on the relationship between rationality and power, in the context of public administration and planning in Aalborg, the town where he lives. His work attempts to unearth the way those in positions of power in Aalborg have managed to control the knowledge that enters public discourse about town planning. He has experimented with ways of including citizens in producing knowledge and with ways of making his research available for public discussion. Flyvbjerg wrote a case study of local power in Aalborg in *Rationality and*

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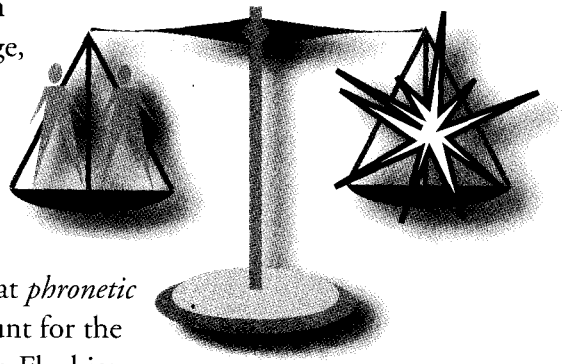
Power: Democracy in Practice (1998). In his most recent work, *Making Social Science Matter: Why Social Inquiry Fails and How It Can Succeed Again* (2001), he recalls his research methodology in Aalborg to present an alternative to the "natural sciences" approach to social science, an approach that he believes may render the social sciences irrelevant to the study of human activities.

Flyvbjerg's goal in *Making Social Science Matter* is to "help restore social science to its classical position as a practical, intellectual activity aimed at clarifying the problems, risks, and possibilities we face as humans and societies, and at contributing to social and political praxis" (p. 4). He makes important progress toward this goal by developing a concept of social science that expands its focus from analytical and technical knowledge to include the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis*, or practical wisdom. *Phronesis* is commonly involved in social practice, notes Flyvbjerg, therefore, the study of social practice should be concerned with *phronetic* methods: a focus on ethics and practical knowledge, the analysis of values as a point of departure for praxis, a basis in context and experience. Expanding on Aristotle's description of *phronesis*, Flyvbjerg argues that *phronetic* social science must also account for the realities of conflict and power. Flyvbjerg believes that public life in modern, pluralist democracies is necessarily based in self-interest, laden with differences in power, and ready for conflict. He devotes several key chapters to updating Aristotle's understanding of *phronesis* for contemporary society and social science.



Using both theoretical arguments and practical examples, Flyvbjerg discusses what he believes are the key practices that would make the social sciences instrumental to democratic life. Several of his insights provide depth and offer new perspective to the conversations about a more public scholarship that have been taking place in the *Higher Education Exchange* and the academy.

For example, Flyvbjerg's contention that context and experience are essential to *phronetic* research adds to discussions about the relationship between expert and public knowledge in

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democratic society. Flyvbjerg is concerned with what qualifies social scientists as experts on public life. He devotes a chapter to discussing theories of human learning, differentiating the rule-based, context-independent thinking of novices from the experience-based, intuitive thinking of those who have proficient or expert knowledge of a thing. He argues that experience with concrete cases helps researchers learn that human behavior cannot be understood as "rule-governed acts" and allows them to develop their own context-based skills and knowledge of society. Thus, social scientists gain proficiency and expertise on matters of public life through experience and context. Flyvbjerg also argues that *phronetic* researchers should be in the business of asking about a community: 1) Where are we going? 2) Is this desirable? and 3) What should be done? It is clear, then, that Flyvbjerg sees *phronetic* social science as necessarily intertwined with a community's work in determining political action. To Flyvbjerg, this is not action research, in which a scholar identifies with the goals of a community and undertakes a study in order to achieve those goals. Rather, the scholar has autonomy in his or her own work but is an integral part of the process of value-rationality in the practical life of his or her community.

Flyvbjerg's ease with a scholarship that is intimately related to politics perhaps stems from his understanding of power in public life. He agrees with Michel Foucault, who believes that the production of truth, on which society bases action, is always intertwined with relations of power. Flyvbjerg writes, "Every society has its 'politics of truth,'" which includes "the types of discourse that society accepts and allows to operate as true...[and the] techniques and procedures regarded as valuable in the production of truth" (p. 123). The social sciences fail, in Flyvbjerg's analysis, by trying to fit into today's predominant politics of truth, the quest for universal theories that would govern social and political behavior. Not only are the claims it makes invalid (by discounting the concrete experiences of individuals, the rules and claims of social science have little to do with what people know and care about), but the social sciences place themselves in an undeserved position of privilege in knowledge production about human affairs. Flyvbjerg's answer to this problem, again following Foucault, is for *phronetic* researchers to leave the business of seeking definitive truths through "disinterested" research and involve themselves in the pursuit of a more democratic notion of

... the production of truth, on which society bases action, is always intertwined with relations of power.

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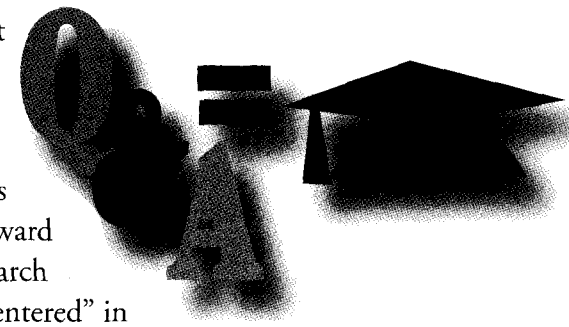
objectivity: "the employment of a variety of perspectives and affective interpretations in the service of knowledge" (p. 139). Instead of pretending to operate apart from power and politics, social scientists should contribute to the understanding of conflict and power in society by reflecting on how power plays into the situations they study and the way they study those situations.

Flyvbjerg's most useful contribution to current thinking about a more public scholarship is his rich discussion of what that scholarship might look like in practice. Like many who have described public scholarship, Flyvbjerg prefers loose guidelines to exact methods. He writes, "The most important issue [for *phronetic* social science] is not the individual methodology involved.... It is more important to get the result right, that is, arriving at a social science that effectively deals with public deliberation and praxis" (p. 129). Nevertheless, the guidelines he elaborates make it easy to imagine how to "get the result right." Flyvbjerg's primary contention is that *phronetic* social science is an analytical project, with a focus on values and power and an outlook toward praxis. As such, *phronetic* research should be inductive and "decentered" in its approach. It should emphasize details and small questions, which often lead to sounder answers. The analysis of "actual daily practices" rather than of discourse or theory should provide the basis for knowledge about a particular situation. On this point, Flyvbjerg devotes a chapter to arguing that the case study is an essential method for *phronetic* research, a method that makes generalizations stronger because they are based on concrete, contextual evidence. Flyvbjerg also believes that a dialogical approach is a necessary component of *phronetic* research. Here, he sees narrative analysis as one practice that would allow for multiple descriptions and interpretations of situations. Case studies also would leave room for the reader in interpreting situations and deciding meaning before entering into public discourse.



Flyvbjerg elucidates his methods and many of his claims about *phronetic* social science by offering a case study of his own research. He describes a particular town planning project in

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Aalborg, putting his involvement in studying the project at the center of his reflections. He illustrates how one interpretation of the town's public transportation problems became truth in Aalborg and how his inquiries helped uncover the source of power behind that version of the truth. Making his research transparent through local media and public meetings, he argues, enabled "outside stakeholders" to scrutinize and challenge his conclusions throughout the process. Perhaps Flyvbjerg's most interesting insight from his Aalborg study is that a politics of polemics and contention, as initially existed in Aalborg, has little use for research in achieving its goals, which are usually predetermined. Only through dialogue and contestation, he argues, can *phronetic* research contribute to praxis in democratic society. Therefore, part of the work of social scientists may need to be improving conditions of dialogue in the political communities to which they belong.

As Flyvbjerg himself argues, the case study provides a check on general theory, and if his own example reveals a weakness, it is his somewhat limited concept of democratic politics. For Flyvbjerg, the hierarchy in knowledge production between scholar and citizen breaks down when the scholar also becomes a reflexive political actor, someone with a stake in the problem his or her research addresses. This view is controversial: many scholars would not want to envision or practice their work as part of a political process. But Flyvbjerg would make a stronger case to academics and democrats alike if his *phronetic* social scientist did not have to carry so much of the burden of political action. As an exemplary citizen, Flyvbjerg is a reflector, an initiator, an organizer; as a citizen-scholar, Flyvbjerg is in the position to offer his interpretation, as one among only a few, for public discussion. His concept of democratic politics in Aalborg — in which public dialogue reacts to high-level political actors more than it initiates action or scholarly inquiry — leads him to rest too much responsibility, and with it power, in the hands of scholars. Even so, by positioning social scientists as political actors, Flyvbjerg goes farther than many in conceiving the role of the citizen-scholar. His book is a theoretical and practical guide for scholars who wish to pursue their individual quests for understanding in ways that contribute to social and political growth in their communities.

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LIVING IN THE LAP OF AN IMMENSE INTELLIGENCE:

Lessons on Public Scholarship from the Field

By Douglas Challenger and Joni Doherty

"We lie, as Emerson said, in the lap of an immense intelligence. But that intelligence is dormant and its communications are broken, inarticulate and faint until it possesses the local community as its medium." — John Dewey

The Public and Its Problems

Over the past five years, a small group of professors at Franklin Pierce College in Rindge, New Hampshire, has been exploring what we have come to understand as public scholarship. It has been both a rewarding and challenging concept to bring to life within the culture of our small liberal arts college. Three faculty-initiated institutes have been formed during this time, each with an eye toward "community outreach and education." We help lead one of those institutes — the New England Center for Civic Life — an organization that promotes the practices of dialogue and deliberation that people can use to address issues in their communities. Over the past year, we have been working with our colleagues, residents of the town, and our students on a three-year collaborative project called *Rindge 2020: The Challenges of Growth.* As we prepared to write this article, we interviewed some of the people we have been working with and asked them to reflect on the lessons they've been learning from this venture in public scholarship. In this article, we share some of their thoughts and a few of our lessons in an attempt to better understand our own theory and practice.

Public scholarship is an important conceptual guidepost for us, as it is for many in higher education who are rethinking their relationship to civic life and to democracy. It's not easy to define and our colleagues aren't always in agreement about what this term means. We have come up with a working definition that has three aspects. First, public scholarship is work done collaboratively by faculty, students, and community members both on and off campus. Second, it involves trying to solve problems, not just

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analyze or explain them. Finally and most important, we believe, public scholarship involves the use of certain practices that help create the conditions for a different kind of engagement between people so that they come to form "a public." A public is comprised of diverse members who think and act together in ways that reflect the common ground they have created and discovered together. Primary among these public-creating practices are the skills of dialogue and deliberation, which enable people to transcend adversarial ways of relating to each other and help them find productive ways to solve their problems together, even though they may not agree with or even like one another. Seen this way, public scholarship helps to build the foundations on which a pluralistic democracy can exist and flourish. We believe public scholarship provides the human connections that enrich not only our personal and community lives, but also our professional lives.

We are beginning to understand more fully how this kind of scholarship is one that liberal arts colleges are well positioned to contribute to, and benefit from. Engaging with the public informs and enhances our professional activities — research and teaching — and develops better relationships between the college and its surrounding communities, truly a service to our institution. It also helps our college fulfill its civic mission. The most difficult hurdles involved in doing this kind of work have to do with the way it challenges cherished notions within academic culture. For the practices of public scholarship require a shift in the way the academy understands the public, knowledge, and the practices of citizenship. Such a change can occur only if we imagine new ways of being other than that of the "lonely scholar" working within the boundaries of a specialized discipline and detached from participation in efforts to apply this knowledge. We must be willing to consider approaches to knowing other than the scientific, and ways of doing scholarship other than as researchers isolated from the complexities and incongruities of daily life.

Our colleague Gerald (Jerry) Burns has been actively involved with doing public scholarship over the past few years. As he looks back on his life in higher education at mid-career, Jerry told us he can now see that the enculturation of academics leaves them far too focused on the individual — the ideal of the lonely scholar. "It's what appealed to me when I was in graduate school," he said. "I wanted the solitary quest for truth that the life of an

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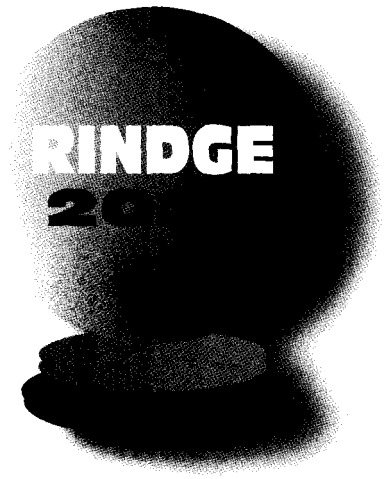
academic seemed to offer." Now, some 20 years later, Jerry is ready to give that up. The personal appeal of public scholarship is apparent when he explains, "It is helping me break out of that isolation."

Jerry added to personal isolation another characteristic he sees in himself and many other academics — the absence of connection to community life. "I've always been a placeless person," he said. "I've moved a lot — often for a job — never really getting myself rooted in the place I was living." The kind of "placelessness" that Jerry describes here is the absence of a connection, not only with a geographic area but with the people who live there. These kinds of relationships are nurtured within a location — the place where people live and work together for a sustained period of time — and therefore are necessarily embodied in that particular place. Communities, understood in this sense, are not easily moveable.



Rindge is a town in rural, southwestern New Hampshire with a population of about 5,000 residents. Rindge 2020, the project that we, along with several other faculty members, are involved in is a collaborative effort between campus and community members to create the knowledge needed to address questions about what they would like the town to be like in the year 2020. The project is directed by a 20-member citizen steering committee and is co-led by members of the town and the college.[1] The faculty participating in this project come from a wide range of disciplines in the humanities and the social and natural sciences.[2] This venture is animated by John Dewey's idea that "democracy must begin at home and its home is the neighboring community."[3] The opportunity to work in the college's home community is, for us, a chance to answer the call — of those like Aldo Leopold or Wendell Berry — to become engaged members of a wider, more inclusive and placed community.

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Public Scholarship: New Ways of Understanding the Public, Knowledge, and Citizenship

The Rindge 2020 project began with a survey of the resident's priorities in four areas: protection of the natural environment, business/commercial development, new housing construction, and the preservation of historic heritage. This survey was carried out by faculty from our major academic partner, the Monadnock Institute of Nature, Place and Culture, with assistance from the college's Center for Applied Public Opinion Research.[4] Beyond anecdotal information and personal conversations with friends and neighbors, local officials had no effective means to gauge what the public was thinking. The survey was a way to help everyone understand residents' views at the outset. Conducting a "civic poll" was very attractive to town officials, especially since the college faculty wanted to involve them and other residents in the survey design process. This idea of collaborative survey design was one that grew out of our many faculty discussions on campus about how to define and engage in public scholarship.

Residents were asked which of the four areas should be an important priority for the community over the next 20 years. Out of the 529 residents who responded (21 percent of the nonseasonal adult population), 90 percent said environmental protection should be an important community goal, and yet in another question only half of the respondents said it should be the *most* important goal. Historic heritage preservation finished second in the list of priorities with slightly more than 80 percent of residents in support, yet it finished last in terms of numbers of people who thought it should be the *most* important goal. Support was mixed on business and commercial development, with 24 percent viewing it as the top priority while 26 percent thought it was the least important. New housing received the least support of the four items as a town priority, but slightly higher than historic heritage preservation in importance. When asked to weigh the value they placed on the natural environment in the context of competing priorities, support for it drops off sharply. The same can be said for historic heritage preservation. Therefore, these results point out the very real tensions within the community over these various goals.

Faculty involved in this project have had plenty of discussion about the pros and cons of using surveys to help the community understand its priorities versus a longer, face-to-face dialogic

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engagement through public meetings and forums. Gathering data through a survey seemed like a good first step to our colleagues since it would reach a high number of residents. However, we had some concerns over the limitations of this kind of information. First, the data cannot help us achieve the complicated goal of coming to *public judgment* on an issue where people differ significantly in their values and priorities. Second, the focus is on individual positions rather than *the public interest.* And finally, the survey process does not engage residents in the kinds of dialogic practices necessary to develop an understanding of the public interest and to come to public judgment. Moreover, responding to surveys does not create the conditions necessary for residents to act collaboratively. Since we are using both of these processes in this project, Rindge 2020 will provide an excellent opportunity to compare what residents come to value *together* through sustained deliberation on the issue with the results of the survey, which indicated their *individual* preferences. The survey was quite successful in reaching many residents and registering their opinions, but what we were left with was an *aggregation* of individual views.

... responding to surveys does not create the conditions necessary ... to act collaboratively.

A Public Is a Reality of Its Own Kind

Resolving public problems effectively and with more legitimacy comes about not through an aggregation of views or even a majority vote, but by the dialectical and synthetic process of dialogue and deliberation. Dewey recognized this when he wrote, "The means by which a majority comes to be a majority is the important thing: antecedent debates, the modification of views to meet the opinions of minorities. The essential need, in other words, is the improvement of the methods and conditions of debate, discussion and persuasion."[5] The "public" opinion reported in surveys is an *aggregation* of individual preferences, while the outcomes of deliberative dialogue are a *synthesis* of citizens' views and insights. They are qualitatively different types of information; the former is an abstract categorization, the latter an element of the community's existence and identity.

Much is at stake in understanding this distinction because, once grasped, we can see why it is so important for people to make decisions *together*. A public is a reality of its own kind — a real phenomenon different from (but not separate from) the individuals who comprise its parts. The process of association

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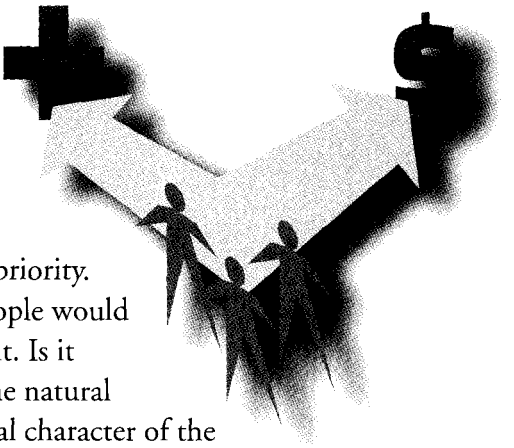
whereby individuals come together and the relationships that constitute the bond among them produces a new phenomenon that is *social* (as distinct from individual). Without coming together, face-to-face, to deliberate and make decisions, we cannot truly know what the common good should be because only the public *as a public* is capable of creating such knowledge.

Public Problems Are Ethical Problems

In Rindge, there are clear conflicts between those who think the most important priority should be improving the environmental health of the town and those whose primary concern is its economic prosperity. Even among those who support business/commercial development, there is a difference of opinion about the relative importance of this as a priority. Also, we are not certain *why* people would want to protect the environment. Is it because they wish to preserve the natural ecosystems, to maintain the rural character of the town, are concerned about maintaining areas suitable for hunting and fishing, or wish to protect the privacy of their homes? The information gained from surveys cannot tell us how to resolve our moral disagreements and our conflicts in value because it does not give people the opportunity to test their views against those of others. Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson believe "assuming that we know the right resolution before we hear from others who will also be affected by our decisions is not only arrogant but also unjustified in light of the complexity of issues and interests at stake."[6]



Public-Making Citizenship in the Local Community

In contrast to other proscribed roles for citizens, as participants in the formal mechanisms of government, as service providers and volunteers, or as advocates for cause, we emphasize the public-making practices that make citizens cocreators of the public world. This kind of citizenship requires us as scholars to stand *with* the public and to regard both our students and ordinary citizens as cocreators of the public realm. The collaborative and dialogic practices that we are using create the space for citizens to

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work on what Dewey claimed was the public's "most urgent problem: to find and identify itself."[7] Implementing these methods and creating the conditions of public discourse is a long-term and time-consuming process. In our experience, we have found that brief and episodic efforts to engage community members in public deliberation do not build the kind of relationships needed to develop an ongoing sense of themselves as a public. We hope that this project — we are approximately halfway through a three-year timetable — will give citizens and elected officials a new set of practices for addressing difficult community issues *together* and that they will come to use them habitually. By developing a clearer sense of what citizens can agree on, residents can more effectively chart their own direction for public policy.

Community members who are deeply involved in this project have noted how different it is from other community interactions and public meetings. They recognize in the practice of dialogue and deliberation, a way to potentially overcome the pitfalls of interest group politics and adversarial forms of communication that often discourage citizens from participating in community affairs and leave the town fractured and divided. Rindge resident Amy Pfeil, who has been to many of the issue-framing sessions and is currently helping to create the discussion guide for community forums, said she appreciates "the democratizing effect" that the project has inspired. "It is a process that gives equal weight to each participant. Whether you are a planning board member, an officeholder, or a regular citizen, everyone gets a chance to offer their concerns and insights." This is valuable, she says, because there is a tendency "for citizens to defer to the town's representatives." Ultimately, she believes, what citizens create *along with* the town's officials through the practices of deliberative dialogue should better reflect the interests of Rindge residents. The outcomes of public deliberation are decisions that people can trust and support because they are created through a more inclusive dialogue that makes use of the rich elements of our diverse values and personal experiences as well as our best scientific and technical expertise.

Practices of Issue Framing and Deliberative Dialogue

In the second phase of the project, currently under way, we are using an issue-framing process that defines the issue and develops approaches to it. We began this last fall by convening four

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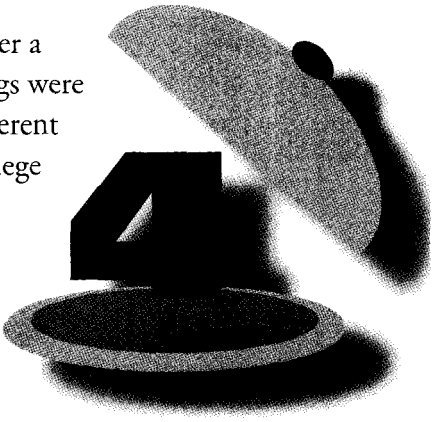

community supper meetings over a two-month period. The meetings were attended by between 20-50 different residents on each occasion. College faculty and several students also attended in conjunction with courses that were designed to dovetail with Rindge 2020. After supper, participants sat in a circle and each was asked to state a concern. Often a story or a reference to a town event that most people were familiar with illustrated their perspective. We continued this process until everyone was satisfied that all of their concerns were listed and clearly understood.

After this goal had been achieved, an informal discussion would spontaneously begin in which participants would ask questions of each other or comment on what they had heard. While the stated purpose of these sessions was to collect the concerns of citizens and to listen for what they held to be deeply important, they also gave residents an opportunity to hear what their neighbors were thinking about. This opportunity to take in the views and experiences of others often caused participants to reflect on, and sometimes modify, their own priorities — or to develop more empathy toward the people with whom they disagreed. For example, one evening several building contractors who live in town arrived in the middle of a session. Up until that point, all the participants had been expressing opposition to any new construction because they feared that the town would lose its rural character. Some believed that those working in the building trades, an important industry in town, would blindly support any and all development. One of the builders began speaking — haltingly at first — about how he had been born and raised in Rindge and was now raising his family here. "I want my children to grow up with the same small-town experiences I had growing up," he explained. As a builder and a father, he was concerned that new housing be well designed and affordable, so his children would be able to continue to live here if they wished. The mood in the room shifted. People began asking the builder questions and exploring ideas about how new development could be planned in a way that didn't harm the small-town character of

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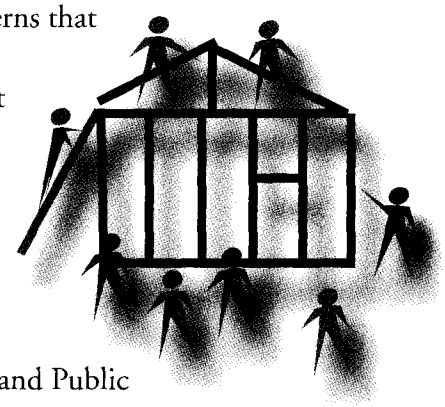
Rindge.

On the first Saturday of last November, a group of some 30 citizens and faculty spent a day together developing the issue framework. We grouped the 423 concerns that we had collected in previous meetings according to the underlying beliefs that united them. We ended up with four clusters of concerns, which form the basis for four different approaches to the issue of economic growth and development in Rindge. The four approaches are: Sustain Our Natural Resources, Provide Quality Education and Public Services, Develop Village Centers, and Nurture Economic Growth.



We've noticed some differences between the priorities indicated by the survey and the ones identified in the concern-collecting sessions. Although the approaches addressing natural resources and economic growth clearly confirmed survey data, the other two represent beliefs and concerns that were not captured in that process. Interestingly enough, awareness of the importance of community relationships and public services emerged as significant concerns, perhaps as a result of the dialogue between residents during the concern-gathering sessions. A richly textured view of community goals and knowledge about how to achieve them has begun to develop. The shift in priorities seems to indicate a deepening awareness of the importance of protecting and further developing community relationships within the larger context of growth and development.

Another task during the workshop was to review the stated issue and redefine it according to the data collected during the public sessions of the previous few months. Initially, the issue was broadly defined as "the challenges of economic growth and development," but now has been restated as "the residents of Rindge must make choices about the diverse economic, social, political, and environmental goals that citizens contribute to and endorse, *so that community life is strengthened.*" Although still in draft form, the primary issue seems to have changed from a focus on the impact of growth and development in the future to an emphasis on maintaining and improving the quality of community life. For at least those who have participated in the community

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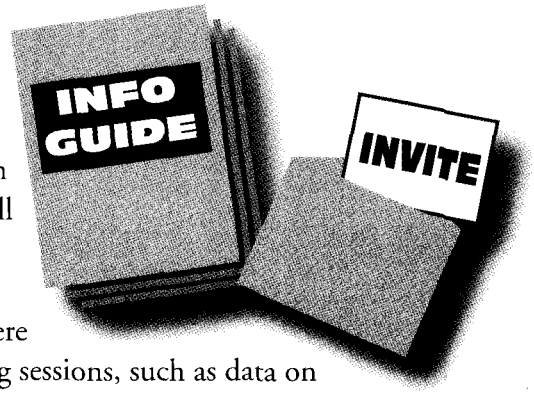
issue-framing sessions, the purpose of any economic growth and development now needs to be considered in terms of the impact on social relationships. The working subtitle of the project, *The Challenge of Growth*, may also be changed because there is some indication that a significant number of people in town believe the current wording puts development in a negative light. They think the current title gives the impression that growth is exclusively a problem to be dealt with or overcome, rather than as something that could be good for the town.

Changes such as these are indicative of the ongoing public scholarship within this project. We are exploring the issue *with* residents and students. This is a collaborative venture, in which all participants bring their diverse ways of understanding the world to the problem, and all work together to create the knowledge needed, not only to answer the questions presented, but to define the very issue itself. If, as engaged scholars, we remain in the position of advisors or consultants, somehow outside or above the process, providing expert knowledge rather than collaboratively working together to integrate our expertise with the citizens who know their own community very well, we would be missing a great deal. We would most likely be working on a different problem, and a different set of solutions, quite possibly ones that are not even relevant to this town's concerns.

Community members and faculty are currently developing a set of possible actions for each approach, along with their benefits, drawbacks, and tensions. A discussion guide will be completed in early summer, then mailed to every resident in town along with an invitation to participate in a series of community forums in the fall of 2002. The guide will include relevant factual information about a range of related technical issues that were raised during the issue-framing sessions, such as data on ground water and septic-system capacity and the relationship between taxes and different ratios of residential housing, service and commercial land use. It will also include information from the survey on residents' opinions. However, this technical information and opinion data will be presented within the



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context of actions that residents consider reasonable, effective, and valuable.

What We Are Learning

The Challenges of Creating a Legitimate Public Voice

It may very well be that the survey will end up reaching more people than the upcoming series of deliberative public forums. It is possible that the survey will provide us with information from a more diverse cross-section of the community. However, public forums are not the same as surveying the public opinion of individuals. Scientifically done surveys are powerful predictors of elections because voting is also a way of registering individual views. Both are measuring the same thing — the positions of individuals. The outcomes of deliberative forums, however, represent a different kind of information. Rather than aiming at knowledge *representative* of a collection of individuals, the practices of deliberative democracy attempt to create *legitimacy* through the establishment of a public voice that reflects the common ground among them. The participants in deliberative forums develop a public way of thinking, which those who have not participated in such dialogues may not share. The common ground they develop has been tempered by an awareness of the tensions and tradeoffs inherent in each position and within each person. The understanding that comes out of this process is always more subtle and complex. It is also more legitimate than the data of public opinion polls in the sense that people feel more ownership of the understanding they helped to create as an expression of their political will. This sense of legitimacy comes about because public knowledge is the product of what Jürgen Habermas has termed, the unforced force of the better argument.[8] Our experience, however, has shown us that forums fall short of creating legitimate common ground among the diverse elements within a community if the diversity of the community is not part of the conversation. So the success of our project and the promise of deliberation to create legitimate common ground will be greatly enhanced, in large part, by our ability to convene forums that attract members of the full spectrum of groups within the town. Success also depends on our creating spaces for them to talk freely and openly. It is a matter of great concern to us that there are still significant groups in town that have not participated in the public meetings we have sponsored so far. We need to find ways to reach out to

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groups such as those who work in the building trades and the members of tight-knit religious communities in the area. Members of these communities may not share the same perspectives or priorities as those who have already participated in the public sessions. If these groups do not see their views represented in the approaches presented in the discussion guide or if they do not participate in the deliberative dialogue process, they will not accept the outcomes of the community forums as being a legitimate representation of "the public." The success of deliberative democracy practices to articulate a truly public voice depends to a large extent on the ability of its practitioners to surmount obstacles such as these.

Building on the Relational Networks in the Community

We are beginning to see small, but important, changes happening. Citizens are beginning to take more ownership of problems and are thinking about what they can do, not what others ought to do. They understand that their voices count and their collective wisdom is as important as expert knowledge for addressing issues in their town, maybe even more so. This was powerfully illustrated recently when the Rindge 2020 Steering Committee was making plans to invite speakers to town to share their expertise on an array of issues related to growth and development. When the issue of education came up, instead of hosting an outside expert speaker, a deliberative community forum was proposed. The steering committee welcomed it enthusiastically. Two community members, Maryann Harper and Tina Hansen, stepped forward to organize the forum (which we moderated) in collaboration with Amy McIntyre, the administrative manager of our consortium. The result was an evening of rich and constructive dialogue among a group of close to 50 community members on how to improve the public schools in the district, a topic that has heretofore created a great deal of division in the town and the regional school district. Several town officials, state legislators, school board members, and students attended as well as the superintendent of schools and several teachers. At the end of the forum, the superintendent suggested that an ongoing dialogue be established to continue this kind of talking about school issues.

Elected officials marveled at the turnout, something they said rarely happens at meetings of the school board or the selectmen unless there is some "hot button" issue. The organizers

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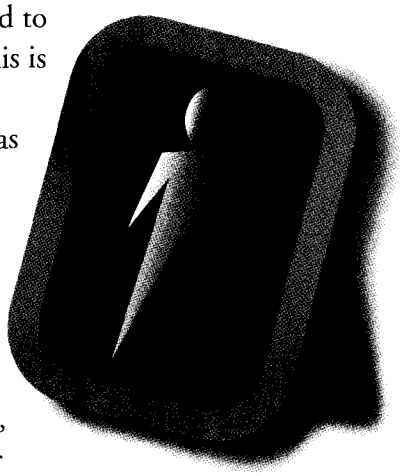
of the event, Maryann and Tina, have lived in town for a long time. It was clear to us that they had created a successful turnout through the strength of their relationships in the community. They were able to draw on a network of friends and acquaintances they had each built over many years. Since this very successful event, Tina and Mary Ann have decided to take larger leadership roles with the project. As faculty members of the college who live outside of Rindge, we have learned how important it is to work with people who have strong community ties. One major lesson we've all learned is how important they and other community members are to the success of the project. We certainly have learned that scheduling a meeting and publicizing it in the media does not mean people will come.

Recognizing the Limits of Science and Valuing Other Ways of Knowing

It has also become clear to us that science and its particular form of reasoning, while helpful in certain ways, is not the only tool needed for this kind of public scholarship. Because of graduate school training and the prejudices of our modern culture more broadly, it has been difficult for many academics to accept that there are limits to what science can help us understand and do. Religious scholar Huston Smith has recently argued that this privileging of science has led to a diminished view and experience of reality. Misreading science, Smith says, "belittles art, religion, love, and the bulk of the life we directly live by denying that those elements yield insights that are needed to complement what science tells us. This is like saying that the important thing about a human being is her skeleton as it shows up on X-ray plates."[9]



For science, as marvelous as it is at dealing with the natural world and helping us understand our social world, is unable to deal with the qualitative ingredients of human choice — values, meanings, purposes, and other noninferable invisibles. For example, if a clean and natural environment is valued over economic development, preserving open space and the forested landscape is good, but science cannot weigh the intrinsic values

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that conflict (environmental health versus economic prosperity).

Learning the limits of science and its proper uses was an important lesson for us as faculty member Rhine Singleton worked this past fall to find ways to connect a new course in environmental sciences entitled "Sustainable Communities" to the project. Involvement in Rindge 2020 was seen as a way to help students in that course engage in problem-based service learning. Amy Mitchell, a student in that class, recounted how engaging in the practices of deliberative democracy helped her and her class rethink what scientifically generated facts and expertise can and cannot do in the realm of public decision making. "My classmates and I attended the issue-framing sessions off campus and listened to townspeople share their concerns about growth in Rindge, while in class we learned the steps environmental scientists have determined are necessary for creating a sustainable community with respect to natural resources," she explained. At the end of the course, the class did a presentation to the citizen steering committee of the project on what they had learned about environmental sustainability.

... the presentation was successful ... because the practices of community dialogue ... had altered the way they presented their factual information....

She feels the presentation was successful, in large part, because the practices of community dialogue in which they had been participating throughout the semester had altered the way they presented their factual information to the steering committee. "Before I was part of this project," she said, "I thought the only way to advocate for the environment was to show people the data on how certain lifestyles and actions were likely to impact the environment. I would say 'this is what's best for the environment,' and they would not listen," she observed. Amy described how she and her class came to the conclusion that they needed to link their scientific data to the values and concerns they had heard expressed in the community issue-framing sessions. They tried to find a way to speak about what they, as future environmental scientists, valued (along with the data that supported their views) in a way that overlapped and intersected with the range of other values that were expressed in the community meetings that they attended. "Without really being conscious of it," Amy reflected, "our strategy became an effort to identify the ingredients of a high quality of life that we all shared." She explained, "it was much more effective doing it that way — people were receptive. They listened and asked us many questions during and after the presentation."

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Over the course of the semester, Amy and her class learned the limits of science. They saw that the facts did not speak for themselves, but that they are organized around a value position — in their course it was environmental protection. Community members had expressed support for that value, but were also concerned about economic prosperity and convenient services. Members of the class gradually came to see that the public problem was not ultimately one that could be resolved by empirical study and technical knowledge, as helpful as that information might be. Instead, the class began to realize that the issue the community was struggling with was a problem of reconciling competing and conflicting values in the community and within themselves.

Acting While Deliberating

In the issue-framing sessions, Amy listened to residents who repeatedly expressed their desire to revive the historic village center, which had been eclipsed as an informal meeting place when shopping centers were developed on the outskirts of town. The residents' discussion about how a coffee shop might help revitalize the town center was appealing to Amy and she is exploring the possibility of a student-run café/gallery space, developed and operated in conjunction with the town, the Chamber of Commerce, and the college's business and art departments. She believes this would meet residents' needs, while also creating an enterprise that would be both attractive and educational for college students. One outcome of the forum convened by Maryann and Tina was the recognition by residents and the school district superintendent that both wanted more community involvement in the schools. The superintendent suggested that some type of sustained dialogue between school administrators, teachers, the school board, and residents needed to occur and plans for this have gone forward. These are examples of the kind of creative, nonlinear, and collaborative action that flows from community dialogue. In some cases, the dialogue *is* the action. Some have argued that the Rindge 2020 leadership should not support these initiatives until residents have had the opportunity to come together in public forums to fully deliberate about such issues and select the actions they wish to pursue. They believe the process should move in a linear manner, and that action should follow deliberation. But spontaneous expressions such as these urge us to

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consider if indeed we aren't actually "acting *while* deliberating." Public conversation and action, from this perspective, are not separate activities that occur in a particular order, but are interwoven parts of the whole human endeavor of political action.

Learning from Emotion, Experience, and Collaboration

Not only does engaging with these other ways of knowing and acting broaden the way we think about knowledge and how we acquire and use it, it also inevitably changes the way we create learning environments in our classrooms. The genuine concern and emotion expressed by residents, witnessed and shared by both students and faculty, has influenced the way we teach. Whenever possible, we now try to work with students as collaborators in the classroom, creating connections between course content and our lives, sharing our enthusiasm and acknowledging all of our positions. Jane Tompkins, professor of English at Duke University, writes, "It's commonly supposed that the suppression of passion makes for intellectual development. . . . But when people care about ideas, which means that they have an emotional stake in them, that's when they jump into debates, find the best arguments, hang in there when the going gets rough, and feel the excitement and intimacy of real exchange."[10] We need to be willing to risk accepting the notion that there are different ways of knowing in addition to the scientific — and ways of being other than as dispassionate, autonomous, and placeless individuals, whether in the community or in the classroom.

We are trying to figure out how we can bring what we have learned from our work in public scholarship projects back to our college community, so we can reduce the isolation Jerry described in the beginning of this article and that so many of us experience. One way to do this is to view ourselves as scholars and citizens whose allegiance and responsibilities extend beyond traditional academic pursuits. To recognize public scholarship as a valid academic activity would mean acknowledging that our professional roles as faculty are inseparable from our roles as active and engaged community members and citizens. Perhaps the kinds of practices that we have been using in our public scholarship projects, which have enhanced our teaching, can also enrich our campus community. Already the benefits of interdisciplinary collaborations have become clear in the strengthened relationships we have with our colleagues and our exposure to the insights each disciplinary perspective — and the positions and values

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… the practice of public scholarship … has not always been easy.

embedded in each — has to offer. We wonder why there couldn't be more opportunities to both work closely with colleagues as well as alone as part of our normal professional life. Too often, it seems everyone is too busy doing their own work in isolation.

As promising as this vision is, the current reality is that the practice of public scholarship at our institution has not always been easy. This is an innovative practice that has not (yet at least) been fully integrated into our campus culture and administrative structure. One constant difficulty we face, for example, is how to do this time-consuming work when the whole role and reward structure of the college is not oriented toward it. Despite some very good work we have done on and off campus, public scholarship has not yet earned a place at our college in the promotion guidelines alongside the traditional ways of understanding research, teaching, and service.

Although it can sometimes be frustrating and difficult to work as public scholars, we have found the effort worthwhile. For us, public scholarship provides the larger purpose within which our more particular identities as teachers and scholars in specialized disciplines find meaning and direction. We find greater fulfillment working together and with others in neighboring communities toward the goal of contributing to the common good of our society. As we move in these directions, we have experienced the richness and vitality Emerson promised when he wrote that lying within the local community's public life is an "immense intelligence" waiting to be tapped for addressing the challenges of living together *well.*

* * * * * * * * * *

We would like to thank our colleagues Gerald Burns, James Donelan, Amy McIntrye, and Donna Reck for their comments and suggestions on earlier versions of this article.

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References

[1] The Rindge residents and town officials on the steering committee are Terry Aho, Laurence Coleman, Dan Daly, Katie Duffy, Alexa Elefthenori, Shaun Fitzpatrick, Edgar Gadbois, Tina Hansen, Maryann Harper, Robert Kelly, Bruce Kirsh, Sharon O'Keefe, Tom Peragallo, Gerald Parker, Amy Pfeil, Amy Raymond, Judy Seppala, Rennie Selva, Rick Simoneau, Candace Starrett, Chevas Walling, and Michael Whitney.

[2] Our colleagues in this civic engagement work are Catherine Owen (Environmental Sciences), Gerald Burns (English), John Harris (English), Rhine Singleton (Environmental Sciences), and Robin Marra (Political Science). On related projects associated with the New England Center for Civic Life we also work with Fred Bennett (Academic Services), Sarah Dangelantonio (English), James Donelan (Philosophy), Mary Kelly (History), Jerome Levine (Criminal Justice), Craig Platt (Psychology) and Donna Reck (English). Douglas Challenger is in Sociology and Joni Doherty is trained in Cultural Studies.

[3] John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1927), p. 216.

[4] Gerald Burns, *Rindge 2020 Survey Report*, (Rindge, NH: Monadnock Institute of Nature, Place and Culture, 2001).

[5] Dewey, pp. 207-208.

[6] Gutmann and Thompson, "Deliberative Democracy: The Case of Bioethics," in *Liberal Education*, (Winter, 1998), 84:1, p. 16.

[7] Dewey, p. 216.

[8] Jürgen, Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1, translated by Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984).

[9] Huston Smith, *Why Religion Matters*, (New York: Harper-Collins, 2001), p. 59.

[10] Jane Tompkins, *A Life in School: What the Teacher Learned*, (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1996), p. 81.

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SUPPORTING THE MISSION OF A LAND GRANT UNIVERSITY AND COOPERATIVE EXTENSION:

Virginia Tech's NIF Public Policy Institutes

By Anne Wolford, Larkin Dudley, and Diane Zahm

Virginia Tech's motto is *Ut Prosim — That I May Serve.* This motto is reflected in the threefold mission of the university — instruction, research, and extension — and in its strategic initiatives, which focus on the development of productive and responsible citizens. The establishment of a National Issues Forums Public Policy Institute at Virginia Tech in 1996 had the potential for contributing to the mission and strategic directions, as well as the outreach efforts, of the university.

The encouragement of the Kettering Foundation to initiate a Public Policy Institute (PPI) at Virginia Tech provided a viable format to help communities address issues they were facing and would face in the twenty-first century. It provided an approach for the Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) — a major outreach effort of Virginia Tech that reaches production agriculture, rural families and communities, the suburban population as well as urban youth and families — to reach more citizens and develop community leaders with leadership skills.

In the mid-1990s, VCE agents and specialists faced major budget cuts. Yet the basic mission remained — how best to reach noncampus-based families and youth and how to help communities address the issues they are facing at the close of the twentieth century. In 1996, the population of Virginia was much different than in 1914 when the Smith-Lever Act, establishing Cooperative Extension as a national adult education program, was passed. The problems facing families and communities could no longer be addressed by a change in animal feed formula, hybrid seed, or a canning recipe. In addition, other sources of sound and appropriate agriculture production information and expertise were readily available through non-Extension organizations.

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Developing Community Leaders and Active Citizens

By the mid-1990s, a gap, a chasm, existed between Virginia Cooperative Extension programming efforts and the needs of the public. VCE personnel, as well as the public, were seeking "the answer" to issues without realizing that the beginning of the answer to sticky community issues often resided *within* the public. Also missing was the development of educational programming geared to potential leaders at the grassroots level. Virginia Cooperative Extension was conducting programs on governance procedures and officeholder responsibilities but programming was usually limited to elected officials. Efforts were not geared to John Q. Citizen. No efforts were designed to engage citizens in the development of shared wisdom or common ground for action on community problems.

The Public Policy Institute, on the other hand, has expanded the number and types of participants that are being reached. It has expanded the use of the National Issues Forums and the practice of citizen deliberation. It has taken NIF to the Virginia Tech Northern Virginia campus. It has taken NIF into Virginia's communities. It has reached Virginia's most valuable commodity, our youth.

The Virginia Tech NIF Public Policy Institutes have made a difference. Skills learned by participants have provided a means for the public to identify, discuss, and deliberate on those things that are really important to them, their family, their community and to determine a direction, a common ground, for action. It has served to provide a voice for those not holding a public office. It continues to provide a voice for those who might not otherwise be heard.

The first three years (1996 through 1998) of the institute were geared to Extension personnel (34 participated in the institutes) and citizens (more than 120 participated) from across the Commonwealth of Virginia. The years 1999, 2000, and 2001 focused on Virginia Tech undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and the on-campus undergraduate Leadership Community program.

So What? — Public Policy Institute Participation Results

The conduct of the Public Policy Institute has made a difference. The following stories identify how the PPI has reached communities as well as various departments and organizations within Virginia Tech, other institutions of higher education, government agencies, and nongovernmental organizations.

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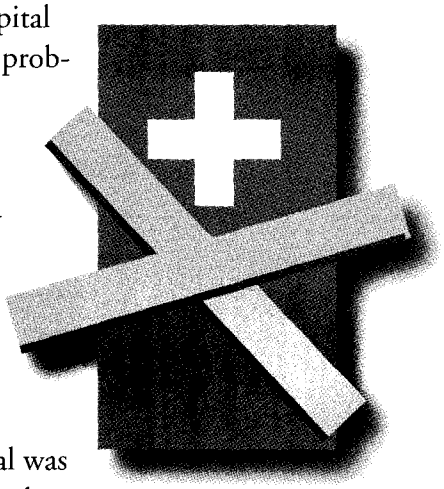
A Health Care Initiative



In a rural community, the local hospital was about to be closed due to fiscal problems. An Extension agent, having attended a Summer Public Policy Institute in Oxford, Ohio, in July 1991, brought together community members to discuss the issue and determine a common ground for action. It was soon discovered that the hospital was out of date concerning service reimbursement procedures; the vision of the hospital was unclear; other health care services in the area were not using the hospital in an appropriate manner; and businesses, that could expand employment opportunities, were unwilling to locate in the county because of the disarray of medical services. When this became a community effort with citizen involvement, remedies became available. One group of citizens applied for a Virginia Health Care Foundation grant to address billing procedures and provide reimbursement expertise. Another group sought to strengthen the link between the various health care services, including the local health department and extended care facilities. Another group addressed the limited number of health care providers in the area and the misuse of hospital facilities by one physician. Because of the deliberative forums, things were turned around as citizens determined the direction of the turn and then sought help in resolving problems.

A College Curriculum

The curriculum at Virginia Tech necessarily provides a variety of opportunities to include the concepts of issue framing and deliberation into courses and majors. A particularly suitable venue is the course, *Public Issues in an Urban Society,* which is taught by faculty in the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning. *Public Issues* fulfills a universitywide social sciences requirement, and students from across the university enroll in the course each semester.

The goal of the Public Issues course is to help students understand why some problems develop into public issues, how they end up on the policy agenda, and who is and who should be involved in the decision-making and problem-solving processes.

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Issues are selected by individual faculty, and vary from semester to semester based on faculty interests and current events.

In the fall of 2000, Diane Zahm was assigned to teach two sections of the Public Issues course. Zahm had identified sprawl and violence as the two issues her classes would investigate and, given the availability of NIF issue books on each of these topics, she decided to employ an experimental design using the two groups of students and the two issue books. Through the experiment she hoped to compare forum student participants and nonforum students with regard to:

- Their attitudes and opinions about a specific issue and the policy options for addressing that issue,
- Their understanding of the role and the value of participation and deliberation in addressing public issues, and
- Their overall evaluation of the Public Issues course, its content and delivery.

Both classes began the semester with the same curriculum and the same activities, including the course entry survey, a segment on the planning and problem-solving processes, and then a discussion of sprawl. From the final case study for the sprawl issue, the control students filled out the Pre-Forum Questionnaire from the issue book *A Nice Place to Live: Creating Communities, Fighting Sprawl.* This group then moved into a three-week segment on participation and representation before beginning the crime issue.

The students in the forum group finished the sprawl classes and completed the Pre-Forum Questionnaire. The following week, they attended forums on "A Nice Place to Live" and filled out the Post-Forum Questionnaires. They also completed an evaluation of the forums during the next regular class meeting. A similar process was implemented for "Violent Kids: Can We Change the Trend?" and both classes finished the semester with an exit survey and course evaluation.

When compared with students in the control group (those who did not participate in forums), it was determined that forum participants:

- Assign greater value to defining and clarifying the issue and to defining/clarifying different perspectives on an issue;
- Recognize the value in inviting all stakeholders to the table for decision making;
- Are more likely to desire an educated and informed citizenry;
- Believe that deliberation holds significant potential

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for bringing about change; and

- Are less certain about what policies are most appropriate for addressing the two issues they studied.

(It should be noted that students who were involved in an NIF forum gave Zahm higher overall course and overall instructor evaluation scores!)

Women's Health Care

Preventive health care, especially for elderly, less-educated women in Appalachian Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia, was the focus of a National Cancer Institute (NCI) grant program initiated nine years ago. In Virginia, a group of community leaders used the deliberative approach to engage their neighbors in the "hollers" and mountains in the grant work. The group of women began a conversation about the need for, and importance of, mammogram screenings and pap smears. Through a discussion of concerns and values (issue framing), the issue was revealed as one of access to, and acceptance of, such procedures and tests to detect breast and cervical cancers.

The discussion uncovered a wide patient-provider communication gap....

In the course of discussions, additional issues of concern also surfaced. In many rural areas of Appalachia, the majority of doctors are foreign born. Through the discussion of health care issues, many women were able to reveal, for the first time, their discomfort with the doctors and their inability to always understand the doctors' accents. The women also revealed they did not feel the doctors respected their feelings, nor valued them as women. The discussion uncovered a wide patient-provider communication gap that lay at the core of many health care problems in the region.

As a next step, groups of women — many who had seldom, if ever, had a say in such matters — wrote and performed plays for community and church groups as well as groups of health care professionals, featuring the issues their discussions had uncovered.

These plays set the stage for further community dialogues on health care issues, especially issues of access and acceptance. Two videos were produced, featuring authentic women from the region who discussed the need for cancer screening procedures. They were hoping, through the video series, to increase the number of women who have mammograms and pap smears and thus lower the mortality rate of breast and cervical cancer.

Subsequent evaluations of this program in Virginia have shown that cancer screening tests have indeed become more accessible and acceptable, especially to lower-income, less-educated

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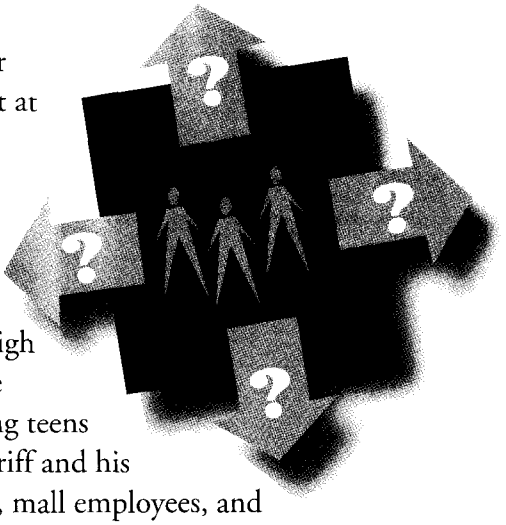
women. This project continues and has become a model, with NCI funding, for a several-state consortium.

Youth Issues



In another rural community, a major concern focused on kids hanging out at the mall on Friday and Saturday evenings. Extension Agent Jennifer Unroe, working with community members, framed the issue on "What Are Our Kids to Do?" The first forum was held in the county high school auditorium. Fifty-four people attended including older teens, young teens with parents, senior citizens, the sheriff and his deputy, a local radio station reporter, mall employees, and the manager of the main anchor store. By the end of the forum, community members had come to the realization that there was no safe place for teens to go on weekend evenings. They also voiced the need for and commitment to, holding similar forums across the county as not all citizens were in attendance. The manager of the anchor store said, "I came because I wanted to protect myself. I thought everyone was against me." Senior citizens learned that parents care where their teens are and what they are doing. After a tape of the forum was played on the radio the next day, the sheriff apologized to the community for his negativity toward citizen input.

Students as Leaders

Under the leadership of faculty members Larkin Dudley and Sally Johnston, deliberation has been introduced into the Virginia Tech Residential Leadership Community (RLC). The mission of the RLC is to prepare students to participate fully as citizen-leaders, engaged in service to the common good within a twenty-first century world of vast diversity and complex challenges. Participants in the RLC live together, take common leadership courses in their residence hall, and engage in progressively challenging leadership experiences each semester. Currently, RLC serves 218 undergraduate students in their first and second years of college. The program recently received the Virginia Tech 2001 Exemplary Department Award for their work in developing and sustaining innovative and effective approaches to introductory courses at the graduate or

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undergraduate level.

The RLC is an intentional learning community that is both residence-based and course-based. The fall class is a foundation course where students begin to understand the principles of leadership and develop needed competencies. For this course, faculty of the Virginia Tech Public Policy Institute, including Dudley, Anne Wolford, Eric Williams, and Russell Petty, held a training program involving student moderators selected from the Virginia Tech Honors Program and the Community Services Assistants. These student moderators then conducted seven forums on "Racial and Ethnic Tensions: What Should We Do?" with each forum having an average of 20 to 25 students.

Comments from students included:

- Hearing about others' experiences added to my own perception of problems in our society.
- Being able to talk about these issues in this kind of setting is a good way for people to realize and understand why other people believe what they believe.
- It was definitely a positive experience and worth doing again. It's important for students to see all sides of a subject.

Some of the comments from faculty included:

- We like the forum and would like to see it continue.
- I like the developmental idea of moving from debate to deliberation — of seeing more than one or two perspectives. First-year students need this. We also found this experience to be a community-building activity for our class.
- The idea of forums is good as it focuses more on deliberation. We need to incorporate more "real world" experiences.
- There is value in the forum "process" — how to dialogue — but there needs to be a better understanding of how we should facilitate. Perhaps all faculty and student moderators should go through a forum together and see how we should facilitate.

Thus, this first joint project between the Virginia Tech Public Policy Institute and the Residential Leadership Community in conducting concurrent forums on campus was successful. The faculty of the RLC decided to use the format again next year with some modifications for the fall course.

The RLC spring course is more action-based where students have an opportunity to apply their learning to actual leadership projects. One section of this course is devoted to issue framing

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using the NIF materials. Spearheaded again by Dudley, and including PPI faculty Diane Zahm, Anne Wolford, Rick Morse, and others, training on issue framing has been offered to students undergoing the leadership praxis with Sally Johnston. Students in the class create issue books on a local issue and hold a forum including students and decision makers, such as university officials. These forums have resulted in changes in policy and procedures on campus in areas such as the residential dining halls and the health center. Charles J. Dudley, director of the Honors Program, initiated this praxis experience several years ago and he and associate director of Honors, Barbara Cowles, continue to support the issue-framing effort through their work with student-teaching assistants.

Sustained Dialogue

Ellis Hinnant-Will of Virginia Beach, community member and volunteer, has been an advocate of deliberative politics since the first Virginia Tech Public Policy Institute. She has organized and moderated forums for department heads of the city of Virginia Beach, using the issue books, *Governing America: Our Choices, Our Challenge* and testing the, now deservedly popular, *Racial and Ethnic Tensions* book. Her networking, characterized by inclusion rather than exclusion, brought Beatriz Amberman, a leader in the Hispanic community; Brenda Exum, director of admissions for Norfolk State University; and Anne Woolford-Singh, Ph.D., associate professor of English and coordinator for the Diversity Task Force, Tidewater Community College to the work.

The group participated in President Clinton's Racial Reconciliation project and were featured in the documentary produced by PBS.

One outgrowth from her work has been the Hampton Roads Sustained Dialogue Group. This multicultural group, organized by Hinnant-Will and Exum, is composed of Filipinos, Chinese, Greeks, Hispanics, African Americans, and European Americans of various ages and religions. Meeting for more than two years, the group has sponsored multicultural efforts in the arts and a Norfolk State University collaboration with the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). Other initiatives sponsored by the group included members of the Eastern Virginia Medical School, local hospitals, and schools of social work. The group participated in President Clinton's Racial Reconciliation project and were featured in the documentary produced by PBS. In all of the Hampton Roads Sustained Dialogue efforts runs the thread of National Issues Forums and the Virginia Tech PPI, as it encourages stakeholders to be part of the work, the dialogue, and the deliberations.

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Six years after attending her first NIF Public Policy Institute at Virginia Tech, Ellis Hinnant-Will continues to serve as an NIF organizer and moderator.

4-H and NIF

Extension agents with 4-H responsibility realized the need to introduce deliberative forums (NIF forums) to their youth and adult volunteers. As a result of conducting forums during 4-H Congress, a yearly event on the Blacksburg campus, and through the Airfield 4-H Center in Wakefield, more than 1,400 teens have participated in forums; two of which were "Violent Kids: Can We Change the Trend?" and "Protecting Our Rights: What Goes on the Internet?" For many of the youth, it was a new way to think, to listen, and to talk. It modeled noncombative discussion skills. Prior to the introduction of deliberative forums, the only way many teens had seen discussions and talk modeled was that of a debate or of taking opposite-polar sides. Teens noted the importance of hearing differing voices and views when deliberating in the forum.

As you can see from these examples, and there are many, many more, through the introduction of deliberative politics into Virginia Tech and Virginia Cooperative Extension, community members are building their capacity for better citizenship, volunteer community members are emerging as concerned leaders, and public school students, undergraduate and graduate students, along with teachers and faculty are understanding and practicing a different kind of citizenship and decision making.

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AFTERWORD

by David Mathews

The reason for having a series of *Exchange*s with the same themes is to allow readers to follow the development of ideas from one issue to another. One of these themes has been what scholars might contribute to the production of practical wisdom or *phronesis* — what a democratic public creates in order to guide its actions. That was the subject of several articles in the last issue, and it is a central theme in this issue.

No instant insight, practical wisdom develops over time and in stages. It begins in determining what is happening to our community or country. The next stage is deciding what those events mean to us collectively — or making sense of them. How do the things that are happening to us affect what is most important to us? Finally, we must make judgments about what we should or shouldn't do in response.

The question the *Exchange* explores is what role scholars might play at each of these stages. In the last issue, Peter Levine points out that practical wisdom is normative; it is about what ought to be. There is such a thing as moral truth but all of the evidence about *what is* doesn't give scholars any more authority to make judgments about *what ought to be* than anyone else. Even so, Levine warns, the empirical knowledge sometimes takes on a normative cast. In economics, for example, what is efficient might be falsely equated with what is good. At most, he says, scholars can use their knowledge of history or evidence from the natural sciences to answer citizens' questions about whether an approach has been tried before or whether it will work.[1]

This issue continues the discussion of what scholars might contribute to practical wisdom by looking at the first two stages. Several articles deal with what David Brown calls "public thinking," which is the engine for creating practical wisdom. Starting with the recognition that practical wisdom ends in judgments about what should happen, Bent Flyvbjerg shows how the first step toward making those judgments — knowing what has happened — can be accomplished in ways that are more consonant

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with democratic self-rule. He worries that unequal relations of power distort what a democratic citizenry knows. So he proposes a *phronetic* methodology for research that begins with details and context, draws on multiple perspectives and interpretations of evidence, and emphasizes values rather than "disinterested" theories. His book suggests that scholars can contribute to the creation of practical wisdom by opening up their epistemological assumptions, their assumptions about what it means "to know."

Flyvbjerg isn't the only scholar challenging conventional assumptions about how we can best know the world around us. In a paper in the *Chicago-Kent Law Review* on consultative reasoning, P. Christopher Smith insists that certain realities can only be heard. For example, compare what you know by seeing your mother's name *written* with what you know by *hearing* her say, "This is your mother calling." Smith defines *phronesis* as "the knowing that guides deliberation . . . to good moral choices" and argues that such knowing isn't a product of what goes on inside our heads but rather comes from what we hear from others about their experiences.[2]

Phillip Sandro takes up the question of how we make sense of what happens to us, which is the next "stage" in creating practical wisdom. He approaches practical wisdom through his work in community organizing and civic education. If we hope to be effective in addressing social and political problems, he believes, we must be involved in a "continual making of meaning" out of the reality we experience. Having shared "contexts of meaning" is critical since we each experience things in our own way. Douglas Challenger and Joni Doherty agree, pointing out that the knowledge of what has happened will only get us so far in solving public problems. They go on to say that citizens must deal with what they call "the qualitative ingredients of human choice," including the meanings and purposes we attach to things.

But how exactly do we arrive at shared meanings when we see events differently, using our own perceptual filters? And what can scholars contribute to "meaning-making," which is the intermediate step between determining *what is* (empirical knowledge) and deciding *what ought to be* (practical wisdom or judgment). Sandro's answer is to immerse his students in theories of meaning, so that they might better "read" the world around them. Challenger and Doherty take a different tack; they encourage their students to look for connections between scientific data and

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the values and concerns they encounter in their communities.

Peter Levine, in his book *Living Without Philosophy*, cautions against the assumption that there are guiding principles or techniques that we can use in moral reasoning. Somewhat like Flyvbjerg, he links meaning-making with the way we know what has happened to us, suggesting that scholars can contribute to making sense of our world by "describing particulars in a judgmental way."[3] These descriptions would allow citizens to comprehend a multitude of details and give them facts that are morally salient, that is, facts about intent and purpose.[4] Scholars can describe "acts, characters, political alternatives, and even whole social situations in thick, value-laden ways." But who gets to say which descriptive is best? Can that be determined by peer review among scholars? Not according to Levine, who argues that the judge of such a description is "anyone who may be affected by it."[5] This argument implies that however well scholars help us with knowing the world, we citizens are still left with the task of meaning-making.

If there aren't rules to guide us to true meanings, what do we do? We may have descriptions of the intent and purpose behind what is happening, but how do we go about determining if these are consistent with what is most important to us? Hannah Arendt, drawing on Kant, says that there is a kind of thinking — "moral reasoning" — that enables us to understand what it *means* for something to exist.[6] It helps us decide what it means when teenage drinking increases, or when the World Trade Center is hit by two airplanes. I believe such questions in their complete form are asking, What do these things mean *in terms of what is valuable to us?* When facing some disturbing or frightening possibility, we navigate back and forth between seeing the event, thinking about how we might respond, and considering how various options for acting might affect what we hold dear. In the process, we redefine everything: what we think really happened, what we might do, and even whether what we once thought was important is still as valuable. When we do this individually, we only need to consult ourselves and friends we know well. But when we are engaged in moral reasoning on public issues, we have to take into consideration how strangers see the events, a range of options, and what is most important to us collectively. Consequently, as P. Christopher Smith points out, moral reasoning has to be external not internal. It isn't like the back-and-forth thinking that goes on just inside our head;

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it begins and ends in public talk. Arendt argues that such public reasoning can't be replaced by listening to the insights of "wise men."[7] We all need to be involved personally because we have to make collective decisions about combating shared problems like the abuse of alcohol and the acts of terrorists.

Does this imply that scholars have no place in moral reasoning? Does their education equip them to describe but give them no more authority in reasoning than in making judgments about what should be done? Or do they have distinctive means of determining what it means for something to exist? This brief article isn't the place to pursue such questions in depth, though it could be a rich ore for future issues of the *Exchange*. It might be particularly interesting to compare accounts of moral reasoning with the results of two studies now under way by John Doble and Richard Harwood on the nature of "public thinking," which is the way citizens "reason" when actually deliberating over how to deal with issues like alcohol and terrorism.

One of several objections to a rigorous examination of the scholar's role in moral reasoning might be that it is far too academic to be of use to any but a few political philosophers. From this perspective, the question of the role of the scholar is only one dimension of a larger issue, which isn't about academe but democracy. That discussion should start with what self-rule requires, not what faculty members do. The latter question can't be answered except in the context of the former one.

Cole Campbell, a pioneer in public journalism and a Kettering associate, has suggested that a new *Higher Education Exchange* series might pursue the specific question of what a democratic citizenry needs to know in order to govern itself. The follow-up question would be how various institutions, including colleges and universities and their faculties, might contribute either to such knowledge or to the process of creating such knowledge. Campbell's suggestion has set off a lively debate. One reaction has been that knowledge is too passive and implies that there is some body of information that people need in order to govern themselves.

Others prefer, as do several authors in this issue, using public scholarship as a broad theme, without any particular definition. The worry, as you might imagine, is that the phrase's different and changing interpretations make it too imprecise to be useful. Something that is anything to everybody runs the risk of being

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nothing to everyone. Julie Ellison argues, however, that this ambiguity is as it should be; no one should have a monopoly on what public scholarship is. She believes that one of the virtues of the term is that it isn't rigidly defined, as most disciplines are. And David Cooper shows how rewarding it can be to redefine your career by your own journey into public life.

Finally, I have heard it said that neither reviving public epistemology nor concentrating on democratic theory will be as productive as simply asking scholars where they stand in public life. That is less precise than asking them how they contribute to practical reason but more precise than asking what they consider public scholarship. The idea behind the suggestion is to let the definition of the role of scholars emerge from where they choose to locate themselves in public life. Someone who elects to be a critic stands in one place, perhaps outside, observing. Someone else may elect to serve the public by making their knowledge available through lectures and performances. In earlier issues of the *Exchange*, Jay Rosen positioned himself differently by posing questions for his profession such as, if the job of journalists is to inform the public, and there is no public, what is their job? Other scholars are locating themselves close to the "winged words of conversation" used in public thinking. You may recognize that quotation from John Dewey, who believed that practical wisdom depends on face-to-face, give-and-take exchanges. Ideas about what to do, he wrote, "that are not communicated, shared, and reborn in expression are but soliloquy, and soliloquy is but broken and imperfect thought."[8] That implies the role of the scholar is to facilitate this sort of communication, perhaps even to the point of doing his or her thinking out loud or in the public arena.

You can judge for yourself the merits of focusing on where academics stand because this *Exchange* offers two cases of where faculty groups have placed themselves in public life, not just to serve the citizenry but to help create public life itself. In addition to the report from Challenger and Doherty, Anne Wolford and associates report on providing space for public policy-making at Virginia Tech's Public Policy Institute. What intrigues me about their article is that reaching out to the public in a different way has come back into the classroom through a new course on public issues, a course that examines the public as well as policy issues. This project has apparently heightened "democratic sensibilities" of future urban planners.

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As I have said in past issues, if you have something to say on this discussion regarding the relationship of a democratic public to higher education, let us hear from you. As Deborah Witte's article demonstrates, the editors of the *Exchange* listen.

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